Breaking the Barrier: Youth Access to Support and Services (YASS)

PRESENTERS:

Patrick Donovan-
Youth Clinical Outreach Coordinator
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Camila Barrera-
Prevention & Education Coordinator
The Middlesex Partnerships for Youth

Amparo Cruz-
Prevention Coordinator
Pathways for Change
Activity:
When you were a teen...

• What was your favorite music?

• Did you have one adult you could talk to if you had a crisis?

• What was it about that adult (their qualities or behavior) that made you feel able to talk to them?

➢ If you did not have an adult to talk to, what kind of support would you have wanted?
**Problem:**
High rates of sexual violence against adolescents

- Nearly **1 in 4** girls who have been in a relationship reported going further sexually than they wanted to as a result of pressure (Liz Claiborne Foundation, 2008).

- **44%** of sexual assaults against middle and high school-aged youth were committed by a peer (Young and Gray, 2009).


- LGBTQ youth are at increased risk of experiencing sexual violence and harassment (GLSEN, 2009).

- Youth with disabilities experience 3 times the amount of sexual violence compared to youth without disabilities (Skarbek, 2009).
Problem: Barriers to Support

- Concerns about mandated reporting
- Parental control & lack of teen autonomy
- RCC outreach and services not reaching teens (e.g., hotline) & policies are adult-focused
- Adultism, judgment, & stigma
- Transportation
Response:

- Themes
  - Access
  - Empowerment

- Parts
  - Trainings for adults who work with youth
  - YLC: Youth Leadership Corps
  - Capacity-Building in our rape crisis centers
Youth Worker Trainings:

“Youth workers” - Adults who work with youth

- Why youth workers?
- Trusted, familiar, convenient for adolescents

Goals:

Adults who work with youth will be able to

- Recognize
- Respond
- Refer

Youth who have experienced sexual violence.
Recognize:
Common Reactions

- Fear
- Loss of Control
- Depression
- Anger
- Guilt
- Social Effects
Respond:

S.E.E.K

- Safety
- Empowerment
- Empathy
- Knowledge
Safety

• **Physical Safety:**
  - Assess for immediate needs such as injury, risk for STI’s or pregnancy
  - Think about safety at home, at school, in community, at your program, etc.

• **Emotional Safety:**
  - Do they have healthy ways to cope with their experience?
  - Common mechanisms with harmful side effects can include substance use, eating disorders, self-harming, and suicidal ideation.

• **Privacy and Confidentiality:**
  - What are your confidentiality policies?
  - When do you tell teens about the limits to their confidentiality?
Activity – Practicing Empowerment

• Disempowering statements:
  “You should go to the hospital.”

• How is the statement disempowering?

• How would you reframe it to empower the youth?
  For example,
  “Would you like to know about your medical options?”
Empowerment
Discuss one of the following statements.

- 1. “What did your mother say when you told her?”
- 2. “Obviously, you’ll want STI prophylaxis.”
- 3. “When are you going to report it?”

Discuss:
A. What is wrong with the statement or question?
B. How would you rephrase it to use an empowerment approach?
Empowerment

- Key points for youth workers:
  - Connection between trauma and importance of survivor making decisions
  - Offering options rather than advice
  - Respecting youth decisions
Empathy Exercise – Pair up

Instructions:
Each person will have 2 minutes to talk, and 2 minutes to listen. We will tell you when to switch. What you will be talking about is....
Empathy

- Key points for youth workers:
  - Empathy vs. sympathy
  - Believing
  - Validating reactions
  - Letting youth know it was not their fault
Knowledge Refer

- Responder’s Role
- “Warm” Referrals
  - RCC services
  - Common access barriers
- Community resources
  - What are their youth policies?
Organizational Change

- Policies
- Creating Safer Spaces
- Handout:

  Organizational self-assessment
Strategies:
Training, Outreach, & Youth Programs

- Building relationships
- Condensing training to meet time constraints
- Open, positive communication to address program resistance
- Linking to RCC youth workshops as staff preparation
- Managing vicarious and primary trauma of youth worker participants
- Adapting to be relevant to each program.
What we achieved...
Increase use of Empowering Language
What we achieved...
Confidence in Talking About Sexual Violence

![Bar chart showing confidence levels before and after training.](image)
What we achieved...
Understanding of the Impact of Sexual Violence

![Bar chart showing the percentage of participants' understanding of the impact of sexual violence before and after training.

- Pre-training:
  - Strongly Agree: 37%
  - Somewhat Agree: 46%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 14%
  - Strongly Disagree: 3%

- Post-training:
  - Strongly Agree: 70%
  - Somewhat Agree: 29%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 0%
  - Strongly Disagree: 1%]
What we achieved...
Confidence in Talking to Youth About Safety

I Feel Confident in My Ability to Talk with Youth About Safety After Experiencing Sexual Violence

- Pre-training:
  - Strongly Agree: 31%
  - Somewhat Agree: 50%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 4%
  - Strongly Disagree: 14%

- Post-training:
  - Strongly Agree: 51%
  - Somewhat Agree: 43%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 5%
  - Strongly Disagree: 1%
What we achieved...
Skills for Responding to Sexual Violence

- Showed Empathy or Understanding
- Addressed Safety Issues
- Provided Options
- Respected Survivor Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Survey</th>
<th>Post-Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Showed Empathy or Understanding</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressed Safety Issues</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided Options</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected Survivor Choices</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth Leadership Corps (YLC)

- Agents of Change
- Youth Voice
  - Giving advice to our RCCs to work better with young people
- Empowerment
Strategies: YLC Facilitation

• The Balance: Empowerment vs. Guidance

“We are developing our own ideas of how we want to get the message out…and the YASS coordinator is letting us take the ideas in the direction we want to take them.” – Youth Leader

• Community challenges and opportunities

• YLC & survivor services
What we achieved with the YLC...

- Peer Outreach
  - To friends, social media, schools & families

- Benefits to RCCs
  - Outreach materials
  - Volunteer and staff skills

- Benefits to Youth Leaders
  - Their voices matter.
  - They impact their communities.
Strategies: Capacity-Building in our Centers

- Becoming accessible
- How do we work with youth?
  - Staff – surveys, training, projects
  - Space – welcoming?
  - Listening to Youth/YLC Feedback
  - Policy in our RCC
  - Outreach & audience
  - Accessibility – YASS Line, Off-site services
Conclusion
What we achieved

• Youth workers
• YLC
• RCC Capacity-Building

• Increase in youth accessing the RCC for services
• Can offer model to adapt to other marginalized populations
Thank You!

Breaking the Barrier: Youth Access to Support and Services (YASS)

PRESENTERS:

Patrick Donovan- pdonovan@barcc.org
Camila Barrera- camila.barrera@state.ma.us
Amparo Cruz- acruz@centralmasspfc.org