



POP-UP EVENT: SUMMARY NOTES

Promoting Youth Engagement & Connectedness in a COVID19 World

May 1, 2020

This online event offered substance misuse prevention practitioners working within HHS Region 2 an opportunity to learn and share around a major COVID19 challenge: Engaging with Youth. The peer sharing nature of the event encouraged a rich discussion of innovative ways to continue youth engagement efforts during COVID-19. Participants shared strategies and tools they are using to remain engaged with youth in virtual program activities, and keep youth engaged with each other. Participants also highlighted the challenges of remote interactions with youth and made suggestions for prevention worker self-care practices.

The information below is a compilation of participant responses to the central questions addressed in the session. Please note that many of the suggestions made by participants were not strictly evidence based and should not be regarded as such. The overall purpose of this summary is to share the collective experience from the prevention field during this challenging time.

Successful Strategies for Engaging Youth in Virtual Program Activities

- Using social media and videoconferencing tools to maintain connections, keep interactions fun and engaging
 - Using TikTok, Kahoot!, FaceTime, Instagram
 - Games and Karaoke within Zoom meetings, have group Zoom meetings just for socializing and listening to music
 - Livestreaming shows
 - Online karaoke
 - Sharing art projects to do together
 - Using Mentimeter interactive presentation software
 - Using the Ripple Effects Program
- Incentives and modifications to encourage participation
 - Creating and sending “Would you rather . . .” surveys to better tailor approaches
 - Give youth the option to turn off cameras if uncomfortable for any reason
 - Consistent meeting day/time, consistent conversation
 - Keeping it short & interactive
 - Allow youth to show things at home they could not normally show in school
 - Physically dropping off care/fun packages
 - Doing icebreakers, using Humor
 - Interactive games within meetings, humor
 - Prerecorded lesson videos with discussion question and at home activities

- Kahoot! with specific topics and incentives
- Partnering with others
 - Partnering with schools to join their video-based lessons
 - Joined forces with other recovery centers to do virtual games across countries
 - Sending video lessons to teachers to include in their connections
 - Invited local schools to create content for local TV channel that serves Senior Citizens

Strategies for Staying in Touch with the Youth in Program Activities

- Social media and Other Apps
 - Instagram
 - Using GroupMe, Heymarket platform, group chats in general
 - Class dojo
 - Remind app
 - Office 365 teams and forms
- Video and voice chat
 - Zoom, zoom text
 - Google Apps: Meet, Voice, Classroom
 - Houseparty
 - IM
- Through Schools
 - School sector rep
 - Through teachers
 - Surveys and resources shared with schools
- Personally
 - Phone calls
 - Emails
 - Letters
 - Care packages with personalized cards and swag

How Youth Staying in Touch with Each Other

- Social media
 - Instagram, snapchat, Facebook, TikTok
- Personal communication
 - Texting
 - FaceTime
- Group communication
 - Houseparty
 - Online gaming
 - Netflix movie parties
 - Overuse of social media and poor habits
 - Too much screen time
 - Poor eating habits (over and undereating)

- Not getting outside
- Lack of exercise
- Poor sleeping patterns (staying up too late)
- Mental health
- Students whose parents have substance use disorders are home all day in a very risky environment without their usual supports.
- Boredom leading to experimenting with ATOD
- Increased anxiety
- Increased use of e-cigs, marijuana, and alcohol

Challenges of Virtually Engaging Youth

- Lack of access to tech
 - Some youth have wanted to stay engaged, but do not have consistent access to tech
- Difficult to balance with online learning
 - We are competing with online learning requirements
 - We are interrupting when we call – students have home responsibilities to their siblings & parents
- Youth having trouble engaging due to lack of sleep
 - Developing negative sleep habits, lack the same routines as a regular school day
 - They are staying up late
 - Parents note this concern also - They opened the door a bit at the beginning and now don't know how to get the sleep routine back on track.
- Lack of engagement/contact with other youth – involved personnel/professionals
 - Many teachers in the schools in which I work are very overwhelmed and getting used to using online platforms, no time
 - Difficulty reaching Youth Advisors

Concerns about Youth Wellness

- Overuse of social media and poor habits
 - Too much screen time
 - Poor eating habits (over and undereating)
 - Not getting outside
 - Lack of exercise
 - Poor sleeping patterns (staying up too late)
- Mental health
 - Students whose parents have substance use disorders are home all day in a very risky environment without their usual supports.
 - Boredom leading to experimenting with ATOD
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Current Interventions that Support Wellness for Youth

- Self-care tips, Resources, Activities
 - Set a limit for screen time and stick to it
 - **C**heck in with my students on health ‘things’ (sleep, screen, getting outside, being active, eating)
 - Presenting art activities, promoting gratitude; sharing Guided meditations on Youtube (Mind Yeti) or apps like CALM
 - Providing student and parents resources across our Facebook page and our website
 - Running underage drinking prevention campaign ads in local grocery stores and newspapers
 - Used May as Mental Health Awareness Month to reach out to school with specific resources, encouraging them to share with their families/students
 - Finding ways to network and collaborate with other prevention professionals doing similar work

How Prevention Staff Can Practice Self-Care

- Set boundaries from work and social media
 - Allow yourself to move away from the computer periodically without guilt
 - Follow a regular schedule; Set work hours & stick to them
 - Take breaks throughout the day; Do not overwork
 - Put down your phone; Unplug; Digital Detox
 - Establish a time each day when you stop checking email
- Stay healthy
 - Follow the advice we are given to our youth
 - Exercise, meditation, yoga, music
 - Get Outside
 - Keep a good sleeping and eating schedule
 - Healthy food and snacks
 - Drink lots of water
 - Socialize (as able)
- Engage in productive and calming activities
 - Go for a walk or a drive; be outside
 - Read, bake, watch funny shows, spend time with family
 - Start a new hobby or creative activity
 - Listen to music
 - Daily check ins with family, friends, and coworkers