

2015 National Exemplary Awards for  
Innovative Substance Abuse Prevention Programs, Practices and Policies  
APPLICATION COVER SHEET  
(INCLUDE WITH APPLICATION)

1. Has this intervention been submitted for an Exemplary Award in previous years? [Circle one]

Yes  No

2. What is the primary target for this program, practice or policy? [Circle one]

Individual  School-Based  Family/Parent  Peer/Group  
Workplace  Environmental/Community-Based  Other

If Other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Abstract**

PEER Services is a not-for-profit agency located in Evanston, Illinois, providing substance abuse prevention, education, and treatment services to adolescents and adults in Evanston, Illinois and surrounding communities. PEER Services' Prevention Program is a comprehensive substance abuse prevention program. The program's goals are to prevent youth substance use among youth, age 11 to 18, living in Evanston. PEER Services collaborates with the Evanston Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, Evanston Township High School (School District 202) and Evanston/Skokie District 65 to implement its prevention programs. The program also works with the Evanston Department of Health and Human Services, Evanston Police Department, NorthShore University HealthSystem, and other local businesses and organizations to implement community-level prevention strategies.

PEER Services' Prevention Program objectives are to increase youth perceived risk of substance use, decrease perceived peer use, increase perceived parental disapproval, change community norms surrounding "acceptable" youth use, reduce youth commercial and social access to substances, and advocate for policies that are supportive of youth substance abuse prevention. These objectives are achieved through a comprehensive approach to prevention using evidence-based youth prevention education curricula, professional development for educators, parent workshops, policy advocacy, building community awareness, social marketing campaigns, and other school-based prevention activities.

The Prevention Program is strongly data-driven and relies on evidence-based strategies to prevent youth substance use. The Program focuses on preventing youth alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and prescription drug misuse, as these are the most-commonly abused substances by Evanston youth. Prevention Program staff employ the Strategic Prevention Framework and also utilize the Seven Strategies for Community Change to ensure a broad, balanced approach to prevention. The Program consistently provides no-use messages to youth. Messages are consistent with prevention best-practices in that they are worded positively and avoid scare tactics while providing youth with information about the risks of substance use and skills to make healthy choices.

In the first two years of implementation, the Prevention Program has had encouraging results. 30-day alcohol use rates by Evanston youth have decreased across the board by 4%, 2%, and 6% by sixth, eighth, and high school students, respectively. However, there is still much work to be done. 30-day use rates for marijuana and prescription drugs have remained relatively constant, and it appears that the use of non-traditional tobacco products (e.g., e-cigarettes and hookah) is increasing. On-going process and outcome evaluations are being used to inform our practice, and PEER Services staff and school personnel are adjusting programs accordingly. With time, we hope to not only decrease and prevent substance use among Evanston youth but also empower youth to make healthy choices and choose to not use alcohol and other drugs.

## Program Narrative

### *A. Philosophy*

PEER Services' mission is to prevent and treat the problems that substance abuse causes individuals, families and our communities. PEER Services' Prevention Program is dedicated to preventing youth substance use in Evanston through the use of evidence-based strategies. Universal prevention strategies are targeted to youth, ages 11-18, along with their families, schools, and community with the goal of preventing or delaying youth from initial use of alcohol and other drugs.

Our approach acknowledges that youth make choices in the context of their environment; environments need to support and promote the choice for teens to choose *not* to use. Our approach therefore takes a broad approach to prevention through direct services and collaborations with schools and other community organizations. The Prevention Program includes the use of the following prevention strategies: youth prevention education, social marketing campaigns, public awareness campaigns (newspaper, advertising in public spaces, web-based, and social media), professional development for educators and school administrators, workshops for parents, community members, and service providers, leadership and participation in our local substance abuse prevention coalition, collaboration with key community stakeholders, policy analysis and advocacy, improving physical design (advertising, signage, etc.) and reducing social and retail access.

It is well established in the literature that risk of addiction later in life is much greater for youth whose initial substance use occurs at an early age compared to individuals whose first use occurs after the age of 21. In fact, youth who drink alcohol at age 15 are five times more likely to have a substance use disorder later in life than youth who abstain from use until 21 years of age. The ultimate goal of our Prevention Program is to reduce youth substance use by equipping youth, parents and community members with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to support youth in making healthy decisions. In addition to providing information and support, raising awareness, and promoting prevention best-practices, the Prevention Program incorporates community-level strategies.

PEER Services' Prevention Program is strongly data-driven. Prevention staff members follow SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework when planning, implementing, and evaluating prevention programming. The program utilizes local data whenever possible based upon the philosophy that substance use behaviors are contingent upon local conditions and community norms. The program also works closely with key community stakeholders and institutions to coordinate substance abuse prevention efforts. While providing information and increasing knowledge about youth substance use prevention is important, the program also operates under the philosophy that in addition to working with individuals, true prevention requires community-level change. We utilize SAMHSA's Seven Strategies for Community Change to ensure that our comprehensive prevention efforts are evidence-based. The Seven Strategies for Community Change help to guide our work to limit youth access to substances, change the culture and context in which youth make decisions about substance use, and shift consequences associated with youth use.

PEER Services' prevention staff members are committed to the highest standards of professional knowledge and regularly attend regional, statewide and national trainings on prevention best practices, current trends in the field, and proper implementation of specific approaches. In addition to providing direct services, we consult with schools to share this knowledge. In selecting specific prevention approaches, PEER Services utilizes research and data on prevention models that have evidence of positive results.

PEER Services' Prevention Program operates under the philosophy that no type of substance use is safe for youth. The language in all of our strategies promotes no-use messages that encourage youth to either continue to not use substances or, if they are already using, to discontinue their use. Further, in

accordance with substance abuse prevention best practices for youth, we provide information on the risks of use while utilizing positive messaging that avoids the use of scare tactics.

### ***B. Needs Assessment***

Planning for our current prevention program began in 2012. In 2012, a community needs assessment was conducted to assess the community's diversity, demographics and geography and relate them to substance abuse prevention needs. Educational levels, high school graduation rates, school performance, and drug violations in the local high school district were assessed, along with data on youth substance use-related emergency room visits and drug-related motor vehicle crashes for individuals under the age of 18. 30-day and past-year substance use rates for alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, illicit drug, and prescription drug misuse were estimated through a survey of 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade students in the local middle school and high school districts. This survey also collected data on a variety of other protective factors, including presence of supportive adults, school climate, and involvement in extracurricular activities, as well as on other contributing factors, including perceived peer norms related to substance abuse, perceived harm, perceived parent disapproval, ease of access, source of substances, and parental communication, rules, and consequences of substance use. The assessment also assessed local, county, and state ordinances related to substance use, including enforcement, retail access, and social access to alcohol and drugs. Social and community norms, price and promotion/advertising, and community history as it relates to substance use were also assessed.

Staff additionally referred to the City of Evanston's Project for the Local Assessment of Needs (EPLAN) -- created in 2010 for 2011-2016 -- to identify other community needs and gaps in service delivery. The program continued its assessment and planning phases from 2012 through the summer of 2013. Baseline data on youth substance use behaviors and attitudes was collected in March 2013. Qualitative data through the use of youth focus groups and intercept surveys were collected to supplement the quantitative data and to test and improve campaign materials for the social marketing campaign. Meetings were also conducted with school administrators, staff, Evanston Township High School's Prevention Team, and via community coalition/town hall meetings in order to better understand the school, parent and community's understanding of youth substance abuse, risk and protective factors, community assets and resources, identify potential gaps in service and prevention needs.

The end result of the needs assessment was the formation of goal statements for the prevention program and information on local contributing and protective factors for strategic planning and action steps. Prevention staff members worked closely with Evanston Township High School's Student Assistance Program Social Worker (ETHS SAP) and the school's Prevention Committee to review the results of the needs assessment, establish priorities, and create a program implementation timeline for the school. PEER Services staff and the SAP also worked with the Evanston Substance Abuse Prevention (ESAP) Coalition - a community substance abuse prevention coalition composed of representatives from multiple local organizations, community members, and volunteers - to create a multi-year strategic plan, with yearly action steps and goals, to measure progress and outcomes. Staff met with the local middle school district's Superintendent in order to integrate direct service delivery and program implementation with that of the ESAP Coalition and ETHS. After this lengthy assessment and planning process, implementation began in August 2013.

PEER Services has a long history of substance abuse prevention programming. The city of Evanston, Illinois, was a dry community from 1873 until 1972. The city's first liquor store opened in 1984; that same year, as the result of a roundtable discussion by the Evanston Mental Health Board, the ESAP Coalition was formed. PEER Services has served as the ESAP Coalition's fiscal agent since its inception and has provided guidance in prevention best practices, strategic planning, and program implementation since that time. With the ESAP Coalition, we pioneered the social norms marketing approach at ETHS in

2001 and conducted a social norms marketing there through 2010. In 2011, PEER Services staff and ETHS decided that a shift in the communication campaign's approach was needed. The campaign needed to focus on only one substance -- to conform with updated best-practices. The planning committee decided to focus on alcohol prevention, given alcohol was the top substance used by students at ETHS. A social marketing approach was also deemed as more appropriate given the school's use rates and perceived peer use. The planning committee utilized the school's substance use data, focus group and survey information of the target population, and community needs assessment data to plan the campaign. It was also deemed necessary to take into account the fact that, based on local data and the age of first use, prevention needed to start prior to high school and include parents, educators, service providers, and others in the community. A comprehensive prevention plan was thus developed, including Evanston middle school District 65, ETHS, the Evanston Health Department, NorthShore University HealthSystem, Northwestern University, the school health clinic, Evanston Police Department, and local businesses and religious institutions. At all levels, the program integrates no-use messages for youth and provides information to help support youth in making healthy decisions to choose to not use alcohol and other drugs. Evidence-based strategies, including evidence-based youth prevention education curricula (Too Good for Drugs, Project ALERT), social marketing campaigns, the Strategic Prevention Framework, and the Seven Strategies For Community Change are key components of the program.

A review of local substance use data indicates that alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and prescription drug misuse are Evanston's primary youth (ages 12-18) substance use problems. Other illicit drug use (cocaine, heroin) rates among Evanston youth ages 12-18 are low.

PEER Services, Evanston/Skokie School District 65, Evanston Township High School (ETHS), and the ESAP Coalition collaborate to collect substance use data from Evanston youth in grades 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12. In 2014, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade youth participated in the Illinois Youth Survey (765 surveys) and in 2015, ETHS youth participated in the Substance Use Behavior and Attitudes Survey (2,264 surveys). Overall trends show that alcohol use continues to be the primary substance used, followed by marijuana.

Self-reported 30-day use by District 65's 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students (2014 Illinois Youth Survey)

	6 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	% Increase
Cigarettes	1%	6%	5%
Alcohol	12%	34%	22%
Marijuana	2%	11%	9%
Prescription Drugs	0%	4%	4%

Self-reported 30-day use by ETHS's 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students (2012 and 2014 Illinois Youth Survey)

	2012	2014	% Change
Tobacco	15%	14%	-1%
Alcohol	46%	43%	-3%
Marijuana	30%	30%	0%
Prescription Drugs	4%	4%	0%

Illinois Youth Survey shows that, by 8<sup>th</sup> grade, substances are relatively easy to obtain. Of 8<sup>th</sup> graders who participated, 16% said it would be “sort of easy” or “very easy” to get alcohol, 10% said it would be “sort of easy” or “very easy” to get cigarettes, and 8% said it would be “sort of easy” or “very easy” to get marijuana. The high school’s survey data indicate that, in the month prior to the survey, youth accessed alcohol in a variety of ways including: 43% from homes (with and without parent permission), 41% from a friend 21 or older, 10% from an Evanston store, 5% from a restaurant or bar, and 11% from a stranger. Focus groups with youth have revealed that a friend 21 or older is usually a Northwestern University student while a “stranger” is most commonly a cab driver or a person who is homeless, both of whom are paid by youth to make the alcohol purchase for them. In the past year, 5% of local liquor establishments failed alcohol compliance checks conducted by the Evanston Police Department, a 5% decrease from 2013. Common access points for youth tobacco products include friends 21 or older (10%), stores or gas stations (7%), strangers (3%), and homes, with or without family permission (3%). Over the past year, the rate of establishments passing tobacco compliance checks has increased from 95% to 97%.

Data from various sectors of the community suggest that youth alcohol and marijuana use incurs relatively few legal consequences, possibly because most use occurs in homes and is therefore undetected. We are currently in the process of evaluating the enforcement of Evanston’s Tobacco 21 policy, which restricts sales of tobacco products to individuals 21 and older.

Evanston Township High School school report card statistics indicate that 88% of local high school students graduate on schedule. This might not send up red flags to many outside of our community, but we are concerned because research has also shown that school performance and substance use are correlated. ETHS does have a student assistance program in place, an alternative to suspension substance abuse intervention, a peer jury that utilizes a restorative justice model to reduce the number of students suspended from school, a targeted intervention program called Voices, Ideas and Perspectives that teaches students positive ways to communicate and respond to conflict, and male and female empowerment groups that utilize a holistic approach to deal with issues that hinder student success. Staff who provide adolescent drug treatment services report that the primary substance for which youth enter treatment is marijuana. Teens participating in treatment services report that marijuana is easily accessible in Evanston and is usually purchased from a peer.

We have a great deal of qualitative data on substance use gathered from parents, local media coverage, police officers as well as high school and university staff. While data specific to youth has not been released, anecdotally, informants describe widespread availability of access to alcohol as well as heavy alcohol use among youth.

### *C. Population(s) Served*

Evanston has population of 74,486. 65% of the population is white, 18% is black, 9% is Hispanic or Latino, and 9% is Asian. It is a diverse community, with over 60 different languages spoken, other than English, as the primary language at home. The median age of Evanston residents is 34.3 years old. Twenty percent of the population is under 18 years old. Fifty-two percent of the population is female and 48% percent is male. In recent years, Evanston's cultural and socioeconomic diversity has increased; currently, 10% of individuals and 5% of families in Evanston live below the poverty level, and 38% of District 65 students are enrolled in the free/reduced-price lunch program, yet the median household income is approximately \$70,000. Six percent of the population is unemployed. The considerable diversity in socioeconomic resources and education levels of Evanston residents leaves many of our youth particularly vulnerable.

Education is valued in the Evanston community, with sixty-five percent of Evanston's population (25 years and older) holding a bachelor's degree or higher -- 37% above the national average. Northwestern University is also located in Evanston. However, achievement gaps are staggering, and K-12 school administrators and other community leaders are working to address these disparities. Increasing child and adult literacy has been identified by community leaders as a high priority in the community, and successfully reaching all levels of the population is one of Evanston's challenges. There are fifteen public schools and nine private schools located in Evanston. The two public school districts in Evanston are the Evanston/Skokie School District 65 (K-8) and Evanston Township High School (ETHS) District 202, with a combined population of 10,429 students.

PEER Services' Prevention Program employs universal prevention strategies, targeting all youth age 11 through 18 in the service area. As such, we recruit youth, parents, educators and community members to participate in various aspects of the program. Our organization has ongoing collaborations with numerous community partners that have been key in making this a successful program. Professional relationships and linkage agreements have helped to sustain cooperative cross-agency efforts between organizations despite organizational changes and staff turnover.

Due to our extensive collaboration with these community partners, our staff have excellent working knowledge and experience working with the populations we are targeting in the program. These collaborations also provide us with many opportunities to engage with and recruit new members.

Through our relationship with the ETHS SAP Social Worker and the Community Service Department at the high school, we have on-going access to high school students who have shown to have an interest in prevention. Also, by using different activities, we engage with the high school students on a regular basis in the cafeteria to further promote the program. We also participate in many local community events to further reach people and educate the community about the importance of our work. To retain educators and professionals, we partner with the ESAP Coalition to provide professional development to our partners. Professional development in cultural competency is also provided to program partners and staff which takes into consideration ethics and cultural awareness in program development and community outreach. Staff members are encouraged to attend school and community meetings and forums to get acquainted with the interests, concerns, and strengths of the community. 2 out of 4 Prevention Program staff have also participated in the Evanston Community Foundation's Leadership Evanston program, a 9-month program which builds community leadership skills, networks, and improves participants' understanding of Evanston's assets and challenges. To ensure that cultural competency is continually incorporated in our work, we collaborate with school personnel and students to incorporate their feedback into program delivery.



#### ***D. Building Capacity***

PEER Services' Prevention Program collaborates with many community agencies. As a result, our program is integrated into the community's overall prevention strategy. PEER Services entire prevention program staff serves on the Evanston Substance Abuse Prevention (ESAP) Coalition. Staff also volunteer with the Evanston Health Advisory Council (the entity which advises the Director of Evanston Health and Human Services), collaborate with NorthShore University Health System and the Evanston Township High School Health Clinic, and are active members in the Evanston Township High School Prevention Committee. Our staff also partner with the Evanston Department of Health and Human Services (EDHHS), Evanston Police Department, Evanston Fire Department, Skokie Health Department and School District 65, including the district parent organizations, on substance abuse prevention efforts within the community. Therefore, the agency has been closely involved with the ESAP Coalition's strategic planning process, EDHHS's community assessment and planning process, and with curriculum/prevention planning in both school districts. The agency is also a partner of Evanston Cradle to Career, a collective impact group aiming to integrate services and improve outcomes for Evanston youth over the next 20 years.

In partnership with the ESAP Coalition, we conduct one-on-one meetings with community members, host town hall meetings and community forums, and promote prevention campaigns using newspaper and social media to the broader community. The coalition is open to all community members, and community volunteers assist in outreach events and fairs throughout the city.

#### ***E. Strategic Planning***

The goals of PEER Services' Prevention Program are to decrease youth substance use -- specifically, youth (ages 11-18) use of alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and prescription drugs -- in the Evanston community. These goals reflect the local epidemiological data collected in the needs assessment, as they address the four most commonly used substances by youth in our community. The objectives of our program are to:

1. Increase youth perceived risk of substance use through:
  - a. Evidence-based youth prevention education (YPE) curricula for 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students
  - b. Snowflake for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students
  - c. Social marketing communications campaigns for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students
2. Decrease perceived peer use through:
  - a. Social marketing communications campaign for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students
  - b. Snowflake for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students
3. Increase perceived parental disapproval of youth substance use through:
  - a. Parent workshops to improve the frequency and quality of parent-child communication regarding substance use risks, rules, and consequences
4. Change community norms surrounding "acceptable" youth use through:
  - a. Community outreach education (community events, newspaper PSAs, social media, and newsletters) on the risks of underage use
  - b. Training coaches and wellness teachers on prevention best-practices
  - c. Breathalyzing students at school dances to send the message that underage drinking is not permitted by the school
5. Decrease youth commercial and social access to substances through:
  - a. Community outreach education (community events, newspaper PSAs, social media, and newsletters) on the Illinois social host law
  - b. Promoting SAMHSA's Your Actions Matter campaign
  - c. Providing positive reinforcement and education to local retail establishments following alcohol and tobacco compliance checks

6. Increase community awareness of policies related to prevention through:
  - a. Community outreach education (community events, newspaper PSAs, social media, and newsletters)
  - b. Parent workshops and handouts
7. Improve local policy through:
  - a. Advocating for policies that support youth prevention
  - b. Educating the community on the risks of proposed policies that would negatively impact youth prevention efforts
  - c. Evaluating the impact of substance abuse prevention policies
8. Ensure enforcement of existing policies through:
  - a. Hosting local BASSET trainings
  - b. Working with police department and local substance abuse prevention coalition on alcohol and tobacco compliance checks

Overall, during the 3 year implementation period, we expect to reach over 6,500 youth through our direct services (youth prevention education and social marketing campaign); additionally, we expect to reach numerous parents and community members via parent workshops, staff professional development, and through community-wide outreach through social media, ESAP Coalition newsletters, and participation in local community events. Community-level efforts, such as advocating for local policy changes, actually impact all city residents. For example, raising the minimum purchase age of tobacco reaches all Evanston youth under the age of 21. The Prevention Program attempts to reach sustainability through its high quality partnerships with local organizations; by working closely with schools, hospitals, and city departments, we attempt to train residents and employees city-wide in substance abuse best practices so that our substance abuse prevention strategies become embedded in the on-going work of our partners.

Please refer to the descriptions below for additional detail on these strategies and objectives:

### **Social Marketing Campaign**

PEER Services' Prevention Program implements a social marketing campaign, at the Evanston Township High School. The main objective of the social marketing campaign is to decrease the number of Evanston Township students who report monthly (or greater) alcohol use and to delay the start of alcohol use among youth. Based on information gathered during the needs assessment in 2012, almost half of Evanston Township High School youth reported 30-day alcohol use. Therefore, youth alcohol use was identified as the highest priority issue. The goal of the campaign is to increase students' knowledge of risks associated with underage drinking while marketing reasons students themselves identified as reasons they choose to not drink alcohol.

### **Coach Training**

Survey results gathered during the 2011 needs assessment suggested higher substance use rates among athletes than non-athletes at ETHS. In addition, the survey results also revealed that coaches are considered a believable source of information about drugs. Based on this data, PEER Services' prevention staff partnered with the ETHS Student Assistance Program Social Worker and the chair of the athletic department and started providing training to all coaches. The objectives of the training include maintaining healthy coach/athlete boundaries, sending clear, no-use messages to athletes, reporting athlete substance use, and effective intervention. The coach training is offered twice a year. All coaches are required to attend. For a couple of years, athlete use rates decreased to rates lower than non-athletes; however, this year's data indicate that athlete use rates have again surpassed that of non-athletes. We are currently working on identifying the reasons for this shift and will alter the program accordingly.

2015	Athlete	Non-Athlete
Alcohol	45%	34%
Marijuana	33%	28%

### **Wellness (Health) Teacher Training**

2015 ETHS survey data indicate that 73% of students find their wellness class teacher to be a highly believable source of information regarding information about drugs and alcohol. Further, this past year, the ETHS Substance Use Prevention Committee identified a need for wellness teachers to be provided with more up-to-date, accurate information on current youth substance use trends and research on how substance use impacts youth brain development. These trainings will equip wellness teachers with the most updated information regarding substance use trends within the school and provide them with best practices regarding substance use prevention.

### **ETHS Substance Use Prevention Committee**

The ETHS Substance Use Prevention committee is comprised of a multi-disciplinary team, including school administration, counselors, social workers, teachers, other school personnel, students, and community representation. The focus of this group is to plan new approaches to prevent substance abuse and associated risk factors among the student population.

### **Dances**

ETHS works with PEER Services to breathalyze at least 1/3 of all students entering ETHS dances. 2015 ETHS survey data indicate that 19% of students reported using alcohol before/during a school sponsored event. This effort will attempt to deter youth from drinking at school sponsored events and reinforces the message that underage drinking is not accepted by school administration.

### **School Connectedness**

Another ETHS Prevention Committee initiative has been to increase school connectedness. School connectedness is defined as a belief by students that peers and adults within the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. 2014 Illinois Youth Survey data indicated that a minority of ETHS students felt connected to the school. Research demonstrates a strong relationship between school connectedness and educational outcomes. In turn, students who achieve higher academic success are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as substance use. To enhance school connectedness, the prevention committee has been piloting Random Acts of Kindness with students involved in activities and clubs. The goal is to implement Random Acts of Kindness on an all-school level. Students would be equipped with a budget for supplies in order to create their Random Acts of Kindness for other students.

### **ESAP Coalition**

PEER Services Prevention Program staff also work with the Evanston Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition's Executive Committee, Alcohol Committee, Tobacco Committee, and Community Outreach committee to tailor prevention messages to the entire Evanston community, raise awareness about substance abuse prevention, and follow best practices in health communication. Over the past 2 years, the ESAP Coalition has promoted the importance of substance abuse prevention at numerous community events, has advocated for local policy change to promote policies that reduce youth substance use, and utilizes social media and newspaper advertising to reach a broader audience in the community. The ESAP Coalition successfully advocated for the inclusion of e-cigarettes as tobacco products and for raising the minimum age of purchase of tobacco products to 21: the amendment to the Evanston Clean Air Act was passed in October 2013, and in October 2014, Evanston became the first city in Illinois to pass the

Tobacco 21 ordinance. The Prevention Program is currently partnering with the ESAP Coalition and NorthShore University HealthSystem to educate community members on this ordinance and to evaluate the effectiveness of this policy on youth tobacco prevention and with the Evanston Police Department to evaluate the enforcement of the policy. This evaluation is still underway, and results are still pending.

### ***F. Implementation***

Due to our extensive community collaborations and partnerships, PEER Services' Prevention Program uniquely comprehensive. Our collaborations not only support adherence to best practices but also improve the quality of the programs we deliver. In particular, several aspects of our program are exceptional.

First, we attempt to prevent substance use in a comprehensive way, focusing on 4 substances (alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and prescription drugs) rather than simply focusing on the one or two substances most frequently used by youth. Second, we have a strong, data-driven approach. ETHS collects substance use data on the entire student body rather than sampling from only two grades; surveys are also conducted annually, allowing us to gather additional data on substance use behaviors and attitudes that serve as the basis for our program development. This extensive data collection process has allowed the program to adapt to the needs of local students. For example, 2015 was the first year in which students could choose to identify as transgender on the annual survey. Survey results indicated a greater number of transgender students than previously identified and also indicated that these students were in need of targeted prevention strategies. To meet this need, the school is currently working on developing a plan to improve targeted prevention to this group of students. Third, we are involved in cutting-edge substance abuse prevention policy advocacy and evaluation. We successfully advocated for including e-cigarettes as tobacco products and restricting their use in public places, as well as increasing the minimum age to purchase tobacco products to 21. Evanston was the first city in the Midwest to raise the age of purchase to 21, and we are currently partnering with NorthShore University HealthSystem on evaluating the impact of this policy.

### **Social Marketing Campaign**

The social marketing campaign at ETHS utilizes an evidence-based, health promotion strategy to change the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of its students via marketing and advertising techniques. The campaign focuses on decreasing youth alcohol use through a benefit/consequence approach.

This evidence-based strategy is intended to reach all students at Evanston Township High School, grades nine through twelve. The communication campaign is implemented over a three year period to ensure long-term program sustainability.

Each month, PEER Services prevention staff design and hang posters in student and faculty bathrooms at ETHS. The posters emphasize the importance and benefits of being alcohol-free, as well as alcohol risks and facts. In addition, screen savers, displayed on computers in common student areas, display similar messaging as posters. The campaign also provides substance use data and risks to the sophomore health teacher to incorporate into health lessons. Furthermore, students use that data in classroom presentations and projects. To further reinforce the campaign message, students are presented with the opportunity to participate in quarterly lunchroom activities. Activities consist of crossword puzzles, fill in the blank, match the facts, and word searches, which all include messages about benefits of an alcohol-free lifestyle, as well as short-term and long-term effects of alcohol use. The campaign also utilizes promotional items, such as pens, pencils, and highlighters, which are distributed to students before exams to bring visibility and excitement to the campaign. All items include messages about the benefits of living an alcohol-free lifestyle.

## **YPE**

The goal of the youth prevention education (YPE) is to develop or increase the protective factors in students which will help them live a healthy and drug-free lifestyle. The objectives for YPE focus on social-emotional learning, which includes goal setting, decision-making, emotional management, communication and relationship building. Research has indicated that by developing these skills, students are better equipped to successfully navigate situations surrounding substance use and delay/eliminate the use of ATOD in their lives.

We implement the Youth Prevention Education program, Too Good for Drugs, at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade levels at Dr. Bessie Rhodes School of Global Studies. Evaluations of Too Good for Drugs have indicated that the program decreases the intention of students to use alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, increases the protective factors and decreases the risk factors for substance use, and increases personal and pro-social behaviors. It is most effective when implemented for 2 consecutive grade levels. Also, Too Good for Drugs has been researched and proven to be appropriate across races/ethnicities and community types, making this a universal program.

For effective implementation and program fidelity, a PEER Services Prevention Specialist delivers the curriculum 1 time per week for at least 12 weeks during the school day. The program covers 10 lessons and includes both a pre and post-test. Lesson topics include identifying and managing emotions, decision making, teamwork, communication, goal setting, making mistakes, peer pressure, refusal strategies and facts on alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drugs.

The other Youth Prevention Education program that we utilize is Project ALERT. Project ALERT is a skills-based curriculum that helps students formulate non-use attitudes and beliefs and provides them with the tools and confidence to resist drug and alcohol use. Project ALERT consists of 11, 45-minute lessons. The lessons can be taught once or twice per week. The curriculum utilizes active student involvement and practice, modeling by the teacher, and reinforcement and validation of the students to further increase each student's knowledge, skills and self-efficacy. This curriculum should also be taught for 2 consecutive grade levels, with the second year being a set of booster sessions. Project ALERT has also been researched and proven to be appropriate across races/ethnicities and community types, making this a universal program. Project ALERT is currently implemented in all 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes in the district, which reaches approximately 1,500 students per school year. Our role is to provide the district physical education teachers with training and technical assistance as they implement the curriculum to their classes each year.

Providing YPE as early as 5<sup>th</sup> grade and continued through 8<sup>th</sup> grade is essential based on the substance use rates for the school district. 2014 Illinois Youth Survey data show there is an 22% increase in alcohol 30-day use, a 9% increase in marijuana 30-day use and a 5% increase in 30-day tobacco use between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, respectively. This onset of use during that 2-year time period necessitates prevention in middle school. Also, per ETHS student reports, age of first substance use typically occurs in middle school, again solidifying the importance of prevention beginning as early as 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

## **Snowflake**

Snowflake is part of Operation Snowball, which is supported by the Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association. Snowflake is a one-day, annual event that focuses on alcohol and drug prevention for middle school students by empowering them to have a drug-free life. The program features high energy activities that include teamwork, self-esteem building and leadership development.

It also utilizes social emotional learning to foster positive attitudes, beliefs and behaviors that lead to an overall healthy lifestyle. We implement this program once per year, free-of-charge, to all District 65 sixth through eighth graders. Snowflake has been a part of the Evanston middle school experience for over 15 years and has great support from the district and community to continue.

Snowflake also has a leadership development component. Middle school students have the opportunity to be on the Snowflake planning committee for the following year. This allows students to further develop their social-emotional and leadership skills while being positive role models to their peers. A portion of Snowflake is also focused on the local high school volunteers. A select group of high school students volunteer to be team leaders for the middle school students. They are required to attend a 3-hour training to learn about the importance of having a substance-free lifestyle as well as develop leadership skills. Other high school students participate as day-of volunteers to help with the logistical aspects of the event. We also rely on adult community volunteers for the event to be yet another positive role model for the middle school students.

### **Parent Workshops**

Another aspect of prevention that is important is working with parents to provide them with the education and support they need to provide a clear “no-use” message to their children. We are able to collaborate with the District 65 parent-teacher organizations at each middle school to give trainings to local parents about current substance use data, drug trends and information on how to talk to their children about those substances. Our goal is to provide parents with the information and confidence need to help their kids make positive, healthy decisions about not using substances. Parents play a vital role in prevention as evidenced in the ETHS survey data that parents are the 3rd most believable source of information about drugs and alcohol and that the more a teen perceives parent disapproval of use, the less likely that teen will engage in substance use. We have been able to develop and maintain positive relationships with the parent organizations so that we are invited back year after year to educate the new parents in the district and provide additional support to those parents returning to our workshop.

### **Kick Butts Day and the Great American SmokeOut**

PEER Services works closely with the Skokie Health Department, in efforts to promote Kick Butts Day – a national, annual youth tobacco prevention initiative. We reach out and invite all local middle schools to participate in creative activities in order to raise tobacco awareness. All 6<sup>th</sup> grade students have the opportunity to participate in a poster contest, while 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes have the opportunity to compete in a door decorating contest. We provide students with factual information about the risks of smoking tobacco, as well as contest guidelines, timelines, supplies, and prizes. Since recent data demonstrates a steady increase in youth electronic cigarette and hookah use, we have focused our tobacco prevention education efforts specifically on the risks of e-cigarette and hookah use. Last year, there were over 200 middle school students who participated in this initiative.

In addition, we also collaborate with the City of Evanston’s Department of Health and Human Services and NorthShore University Health System’s Student Health Center, and take part in the American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout. In 2014, we reached over 1,200 students, ages 14-18. We provided students with educational information on tobacco marketing, electronic cigarettes and hookah. Furthermore, we helped implement the Kick Butts Day ‘Not A Replacement’ campaign, which reached over 1,700 high school students and 5,000 community members.

## ***G. Evaluation***

### **YPE**

Youth Prevention Education program effectiveness is measured with both process and outcome evaluations. By using observations, satisfaction surveys and stakeholder interviews/surveys we will determine if the program was successfully implemented. Participant engagement will be determined through attendance (at least 80% lesson completion rate) among all classes in each grade, retention (at least 80% of students complete both pre/post tests), completion of student workbooks and homework.

We will also use outcome evaluation tools to measure whether or not a difference in knowledge, skills and behaviors were made for the students who received the program. This will be completed through

pre/post tests and survey data. At a broader level, outcomes will be measured by Illinois Youth Survey youth 30-day substance use rates (the standard measure of youth use), perceived harm of substance use, and social norms related to ATOD use. Local district data will be collected and 30-day use rates, perceived harm, and social norms at the school receiving the program will be compared to rates at schools where no youth prevention education is provided.

Pre- and Post-tests are utilized to measure changes in knowledge, skills, and behavior among youth prevention education participants. The pre- and post-tests measure items such as specific skills (peer pressure, communication, goals, etc.) and knowledge about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD).

Too Good for Drugs also includes a student survey that measures students on 4 different risk and protective factors: perception of the effects of ATOD, goal setting skills, social and resistance skills and emotional competence/self efficacy. After evaluating differences in the pre- and post-tests we are able to determine individual improvement as well as class and grade level improvement. While our program is still underway, preliminary results indicate that students have increased knowledge and skills after completing the program.

### **Snowflake**

Snowflake effectiveness is measured using agency-developed participant and facilitator surveys and overall attendance. The participant surveys include information regarding how much participants liked the various activities throughout the evening and also what they would change for future events. There is also a section of the survey to obtain information from the participants on to determine they learned or used specific skills such as teamwork or decision making. The facilitator survey asks if the training prepared them to facilitate their small group, what aspects they felt were beneficial for the participants and if the participants had a meaningful experience. Actual event attendance is tracked through event sign-in, with a target of 120 students in attendance. Results from our first two years of implementation indicate that facilitators have been highly satisfied by the training. With regards to attendance, we reached 95% of our target in year 1 and 70% of our target in year 2, so we plan to increasing event promotion for year 3.

Participant Satisfaction Surveys (agency-developed) are utilized to measure changes in knowledge, behavior, and confidence among parents in the parent education group and among Snowflake participants.

As these measures are agency-developed, we are able to tailor our questions to fit the specific population we are working with and ask detailed questions about the activities, topics and skills we are addressing.

Survey results are analyzed to determine success of the current program and drive the content of future programming. Our first two years of Snowflake indicate that a vast majority of students enjoyed the event; 95% said they learned about positive decision-making, 82% learned team work, 93% made positive relationships through group exercises, and 79% reported interest in participating again.

### **Parent Workshops**

The parent workshops are evaluated based process evaluation as well as agency-developed participant satisfaction surveys. The process evaluation looks at attendance as well as engagement during the workshop by the participants. The satisfaction surveys not only ask if the parents have learned new information but asks if they will take what they learned home and talk to their teen about substance use.

Preliminary survey results indicate that a majority of parents find the workshops useful and engaging. We are working on improving parent participation in the satisfaction survey.

### **Social Marketing Campaign**

The social marketing campaign is evaluated through process evaluation as well as outcome evaluation.

Process evaluation, done through student focus groups and intercept surveys, allows us to reflect back to better understand how well the messages were delivered and received by students. Last year, focus groups were conducted asking students questions on whether or not they find the prevention messages about

alcohol believable, interesting and relatable. A total of 44 students participated in focus groups. Students also provide suggestions on what worked and what type of messages should be used for the upcoming school year. In addition, over 249 students voted on campaign themes, images, and messages for the upcoming school year.

Outcome evaluation is measured through the annual student survey, which asks students questions related to substance use attitudes and behaviors. Based on the results from the 2015 ETHS Substance Use Behavior and Attitudes Survey, 30-day alcohol use rates among youth have decreased by 6% from 2012.

### **Coach Training**

The effectiveness of the coaches training is also measured through process and outcome evaluation. Surveys are completed by coaches at the end of each training session. They provide feedback on the effectiveness of the training as well as suggestions for improvement. Outcome evaluation of the coaches training is measured through the Substance Use Behavior and Attitudes Survey. In 2013, after implementing the training for 2 years, the 30-day alcohol use rates by athletes decreased by 8%. However, in 2014, athlete use rates again surpassed that of non-athletes. We are currently determining how to address this increase in use.

The Wellness (Health) Teacher Training, which contains content very similar to the Coach Training, will be evaluated in a similar manner to Coach Trainings once implementation begins.

### **ESAP Coalition**

The community coalition evaluates overall outcomes by tracking changes in 30-day use over time. Since 2012, high school 30-day alcohol use rates have decreased by 6%. However, there is still much work to be done: during that same timeframe, 30-day marijuana use rates have increased by 1%, and 30-day prescription drug misuse has increased by 2%; cigarette use has stayed approximately constant, but there has been a great increase in e-cigarette and hookah use. Community outreach has expanded by approximately 450 people in the past year due to the launching of a monthly newsletter and improved social media outreach.

### **Kick Butts Day and the Great American SmokeOut**

The effectiveness of these tobacco prevention awareness initiatives is evaluated through measuring the number of youth reached through awareness activities and by changes in 30-day tobacco use rates. We are still waiting on outcome data on potential changes in 30-day use of any tobacco (cigarettes, e-cigarettes, hookah, etc.); however, participation in the Great American SmokeOut increased by one-third in the second year of implementation, reaching 1,200 students. Kick Butts Day participation has varied depending on school participation and we are focusing on improving participation this upcoming year.

### ***H. Program Management***

PEER Services Prevention Program has 4 full-time equivalents: a Prevention Program Coordinator, 2 Prevention Specialists, and a Coalition Coordinator for the Evanston Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition. The Prevention Program Coordinator provides direct, day-to-day supervision of other program staff, oversees all prevention programs, provides consultation on best practices, program development, and program evaluation, and fulfills reporting requirements for funders. The Coordinator also serves as the Drug-Free Communities Project Direct for the ESAP Coalition and assists in the ETHS Prevention Committee. Prevention Specialists provide direct services, including implementing youth prevention education, developing communication campaign materials, planning and staffing Snowflake, and participating in ESAP Coalition activities. The role also involves working with high school prevention teams and community coalition building. The Coalition Coordinator manages the day-to-day operations

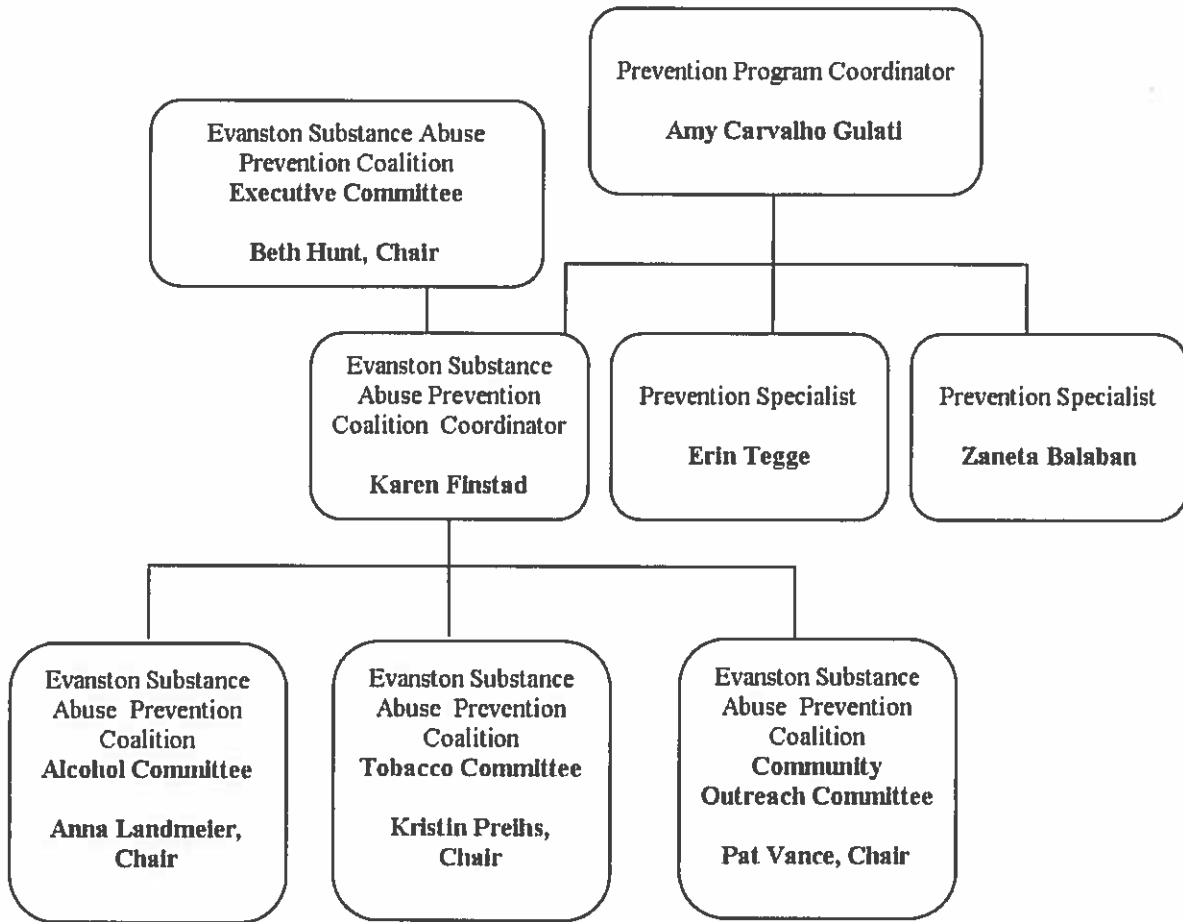


of the coalition, coordinates all of the ESAP Coalition committees, oversees community outreach, recruitment and retention, and manages the communications and social media for the coalition.

The Prevention Program is mainly funded by state and federal funds and receives some additional local funding for additional prevention programming (see table). The program is able to maximize the financial resources provided with well-established partnerships. Community organizations (Evanston Township High School, Evanston Health and Human Services, and the Evanston Police Department) provide in-kind staff time for collaborative prevention efforts, and other groups help to provide meeting space and supplies at no-cost. We also benefit from community volunteers who participate in community events and meetings throughout the year.

Effective communication is achieved through regular communication via in-person meetings, web/social media communications, committee and community meetings. Prevention staff cooperate daily and meet once per week with the Prevention Coordinator for on-going programmatic supervision. The ETHS Prevention Committee meets every six weeks to coordinate efforts. ESAP Coalition meetings occur quarterly, with its committees meeting monthly. In addition, communication is sent out to partners and community stakeholders monthly via the ESAP Coalition newsletter.

**PEER Services, Inc.  
Prevention Program  
Organizational Chart**



**Prevention Program Budget Narrative (FY15)**

<b>Source of Income</b>	<b>Income Amount</b>	<b>Expenses</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Substance Abuse Prevention Program	\$150,000	\$150,000	This program supports 2 full-time prevention specialists and part of the prevention program coordinator's salary as well as program operational costs and program supplies to implement youth prevention education curricula, implement communication campaigns, and participate in coalition building.
Drug-Free Communities Support Program, ONDCP and SAMHSA	\$125,000	\$125,000	This grant funds the Evanston Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition. Expenses include one full-time coalition coordinator and part of the coalition coordinator's supervisor's salary. Other expenses covered include program operational costs and supplies for community and school-based outreach.
Cebrin Goodman Foundation	\$4,000	\$4,000	This grant is awarded to Evanston Township High School. PEER Services assists with the grant writing and program implementation of this grant each year. Grant funds are used to fund various prevention programs within ETHS including the Coach Training, Wellness Teacher Training, Prevention Committee, prevention support at school dances, and other prevention-related staff professional development.
Evanston School District 65	\$2,800	\$3,000	These resources help to pay for presenters and supplies for the annual Snowflake event. The difference in income and expenses is covered by donations from individuals and local organizations.
Skokie Health Department	\$1,000	\$1,000	Skokie Health Department contributes to the annual Kick Butts Day tobacco awareness program. Funding helps to pay for program supplies and additional staff time needed to plan and implement the program.
Exemplary Awards mini-grant (if awarded)	\$1,650	\$1,650	Mini-grant funds will be used to supplement Evanston Township High School's social marketing campaign on marijuana. We currently implement a social marketing campaign for alcohol prevention (funded by IDHS) and the school prevention team implements a

			<p>complementary campaign on marijuana. If we receive the Exemplary Award, the mini-grant will help to fund program and evaluation supplies to enhance the scope of this universal prevention strategy.</p>
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