National Addictions Awareness Week

This report is to assist with planning and implementation of National Addictions Awareness Week.

Before starting please ensure you have a full understanding of what National Addictions Awareness Week is about. A great source is the canadian center on substance abuse website 


Each year a new theme is posted and is usually posted a couple of weeks prior to the event. The event is held every year between November 12-18. This site is also a great source to assist you in planning for your event as well as finding material such as email and media publication.

Once you have completed your research and have a bit of understanding on what the event is about, have a meeting with Polly, Amanda and Justine to ask any questions you may have. This would be a great time to understand what was done the years prior, what went well, and areas that can be improved. In this report we have put together our version of the event in hopes that it will assist future students.

Due to our placement days being Monday to Wednesday we were able to split the event days in three sections.

Day 1

Day one was composed of a Choose Your Ride event, organized by Justine (health services). The choose your ride event was successful. There were police officers that brought in simulators such as drunk goggles, body weights etc. The purpose was to allow students to understand how the consumption of drugs/alcohol can impact individual’s physically and what would happen if you were to be pulled over by the police in an impaired state. We also had an Umbrella Project booth where we chatted with students, played games, and gave out prizes. The games were “blocky stacky game” from the umbrella project’s rainy daze app. We also had students try on the drunk goggles and walk a straight path, as well attempting to put a condom on a water bottle. The purpose of this was to engage students in a fun manner while educating them and bringing awareness to the effects of drugs/alcohol.

Day 2
Day two consisted of an agency fair. We reached out to different agencies in the community such as the royal ottawa concurrent disorders program, Recovery ally, and Rideauwood addiction and family services. This gave us a wonderful opportunity to network with the staff representing these agencies. It was also an opportunity to become knowledgeable of the services they offer to better assist students who may be seeking treatment outside of the college. Recovery ally was a great resource that had a powerful message surrounding de-stigmatization of addiction. Recovery Ally campaign did this by engaging students in an energetic and inviting manner while taking photos with students that held a “Recovery Ally” sign. All of the photos are posted on Recovery Ally’s Facebook page for people to like and share. We also had a presentation by Gord Garner, the chair and advocate for Recovery Day Ottawa. We also utilized the services offered within the college that would reflect the principles of National Addictions Awareness Week, we reached out to counselling and health services to participate in the agency fair.

Day 3
On day 3, we decided to focus on behavioural addictions such as gambling, sex addiction and eating disorders. We reached out to the LESA addictions services (offered through Centretown Community Centre), Whitestone sex addiction services and Ontario Addictions Treatment Centre (OATC). Day 3 was not as successful in terms of student engagement. Although day 3 was not as successful as day 1 and 2, it was a learning opportunity for us. For example, we noticed a few students were not approaching booths because they did not feel the services were relevant to them which gave us an opportunity to have a discussion around the reasons that it might be important to know what resources are in the community, whether for themselves or a loved one. This would give students the information needed to help those around them.

Day 4
On day 4, we held an event in the evening at Algonquin College residence. The Recovery Ally team was there again, taking photos of students with the “Recovery Ally” sign and educating students on what it means to be an ally of recovery. We were there representing the Umbrella Project, playing games and
chatting with students about safer drug and alcohol use. We also held a Mario Kart tournament with the students wearing “drunk goggles”. “Drunk goggles” simulate physical and visual symptoms of being intoxicated. The purpose of this game was to simulate drunk driving and give opportunities to have discussions with students about the impacts and consequences of driving while under the influence. We also had a popcorn machine. In order to get the popcorn, students would first have to play a game and/or answer a myth-busting question about different types of addictions and become a recovery ally by taking a photo. This was a great incentive and tactic to get students involved. This tactic is very useful with this demographic. College students LOVE free food!

Although we encountered some pitfalls, the event was successful and we were able to reach some students. Below we have listed some tips to help the next NAAW be a success too!

**General Thoughts**

- Still able to connect with some people
- Had parents come up and ask about harm reduction information
- Take care with cannabis - The police were shocked to see our resources that were seemingly “drug positive”. However, this gave us an opportunity to communicate with the officers about the idea of harm reduction, instead of shaming drugs and the individuals who use them.
- Opportunity for networking with community agencies
- Blocky stack game - worked very well
- Having a speaker that has good community relationships is an advantage in getting more people, therefore more conversations and engagement
- Choose your ride was very beneficial
- Important to have all the community organizations come together
- Having the Recovery Ally campaign each day would have been an advantage
- The photo portion of Recovery Ally was really engaging students
- Could have mixed and mingled each day (not categorized things) and brought more agencies each
Volunteers

We reached out to Lisa Roots and she provided student volunteers from first year Community and Justice Services. Volunteers can be super helpful in engaging with students and staff about the topic of addiction if you brief them well, also they can assist in the setup and teardown of your event.

Recommendations

1. Residence night - cotton candy machine did not work out, it was super heavy and very difficult to transport. Would recommend testing the machine ahead of time and reviewing how it works with somebody who knows how to operate the machine.

2. Communication at the very beginning - at the beginning it was a bit unclear as to what the expectations were. It was uncertain whether we had just a table for our event, or multiple tables and more space. In the future it is recommended that you make sure what space you are going to have so you can contact agencies earlier on.

3. Planning definite meet up times - Among placement students it would be more effective to set a schedule for organizing committee and then committing to meeting times and places. For example, putting in your schedule to meet each week on Wednesday in Health Services from 12-3pm.

4. Our day 3 did not have a main event (ie. guest speaker), it is recommended for future NAAW to have a main event for each day.

5. We would also recommend creating interactive games for each agency to draw students in. A lot of students were interested in talking to us at the Umbrella Project table because of the games and incentives (lip balms, pins etc.) If a volunteer or event facilitator is running a game for at least every 2 agencies we think it will increase engagement and student interaction with each agency.

6. There was an agency that confirmed in the beginning and then closer to the event, we did not hear back from them. We encourage consistent and clear communication about times, dates and locations.
between you and the agencies. As well, making sure you have the same with the co-facilitators of this event. Communication is very important when planning an event of this size.

7. Utilize the resources of the college, there is a ball pit, there is a cotton candy machine in Residence.

There are many options and opportunities (without spending a fortune), just go for it!

**What went well:**

1. Conversations
2. Blocky Stack
3. Mario Kart was pretty great
4. Recovery Ally
5. Big prizes - worked really well. Prizes included chocolate bars and mugs with goodies in them. The trick to giving out prizes is including resources in all prizes, each prize included Umbrella Project swag and pamphlets for services offered through the college and Umbrella Project in relation to substance use.
6. Gord Garner - speaker in the AC Hub - went really well

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**Agenda for National Addiction Awareness Week**

**Day 1:**

- Choose your ride program
- Ottawa Police and RCMP
- Umbrella Project Booth with games and prizes
● MADD Booth

Day 2:

● Gord Garner from recovery ally as a guest speaker in the AC Hub
● Recovery Ally Campaign Booth
● Umbrella Project Booth with games and prizes
● Counselling Services
● Royal Concurrent Disorders
● Rideauwood Family Services

Day 3:

● OATC (Ontario Addiction Treatment Center)
● Centretown Community Centre
● Whitestone Sex Addiction Treatment
● Umbrella Project Booth with games and prizes

Day 4, Residence Night:

● Recovery Ally Campaign
● Umbrella Project Booth with games and prizes
● Mario kart with drunk simulation goggles