Development of a Training Manual for Volunteers Working with At-Risk Youth

By

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Dedication

For my family for their continual support and dedication to my education and future career.
Abstract

The current project was the development of a training manual for community volunteers working with at-risk youth, ages 12 to 17, in a group program setting. Youth who participate in such group programs are those completing a youth diversion program as per the decision of the court and a caseworker. The need for a training manual was expressed by agency staff members and through a file review of written feedback given by past agency volunteers. A review of the current training manual in place by the agency, volunteer and staff member feedback, and relevant literature helped to inform the development of the manual content. The manual content includes information and strategies for managing difficult behaviour and situations presented by the youth, building rapport, conflict resolution, duty to report serious occurrences and abuse, and the roles and responsibilities of the volunteer. Participants included in the current project were agency staff members and volunteers. Staff members were invited to voluntarily provide anonymous feedback both pre- and post-manual development via survey, however, responses were only provided for pre-manual development. Volunteers were invited to provide feedback on a weekly basis during group programs, as per request of the agency, however, the number of responses was inconsistent over the course of the group. Feedback collected from both staff members and volunteers, however limited, was beneficial to the project and the student researcher successfully created a new volunteer training manual.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Juvenile detention, a traditional form of addressing young offenders in the youth justice system, is becoming less frequently utilized for youth crime (Hamilton, 2007). Youth diversion is becoming a more commonly used alternative to the traditional method of juvenile detention (Hamilton, 2007). Juvenile detention is costly, can lead to negative labelling, and can cause strain on families and communities (Hamilton, 2007). Youth diversion is designed to reduce the negative effects and stigma of detention, as well as decrease youth involvement with the criminal justice system (Hamilton, 2007). Many diversion programs differ in type, structure, and content, however, the goal of reducing justice system and police involvement remains constant (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Referrals for diversion may come from the youth themselves, parents, family members, police, or members of the court system.

Many youth diversion programs offered by agencies involve the use of community volunteers. These programs are structured to run as group sessions, and without the use of community volunteers, the programs would not exist or be successful. As volunteers are a core component of such programs, they require training in order to become successful partners. Staff members at the student researcher’s agency have expressed that challenging behaviours, such as lack of motivation, lack of participation, disruptive behaviour, and socially inappropriate behaviour, are often displayed during group sessions. These behaviours are often a challenge for volunteers to manage, and the need for an in-depth training manual has been expressed. As stated by Berry et al. (2012), it is important for workers to develop a trusting and working relationship with their clients. It is believed that training programs can assist volunteers improve a working relationship by helping them understand challenging behaviours. By designing a training manual, volunteers will be given the opportunity to become more educated and aware of various behaviours, why the behaviours may be occurring, and how the behaviours can be addressed.

The training manual that will be developed for volunteers will include an overview of youth diversion, including its purpose and importance, and behavioural strategies to use to identify and address challenging behaviours that occur during program group sessions. This includes strategies on helping a client stay on-task, how to redirect an inappropriate behaviour, and how to improve rapport-building skills. Along with behavioural strategies, there will be behavioural scenarios and rehearsals that describe various situations that may occur during group sessions, and how to address each one. As well, there will be group activities designed to improve volunteer group dynamics.

The need for a training manual has been expressed by the staff members at the student researcher’s agency. A review of previous, anonymous, volunteer feedback was completed, and the feedback identified a need for more training on addressing challenging behaviours. Feedback from the staff members of the agency will be collected both pre-manual development and post-manual development. As well, direct observations of volunteer training and a file review of current resources available to volunteers will take place. Feedback collection, observations, and a file review will aid in determining which components of current volunteer training require improvement and/or development.

A training manual for volunteers can be used in many of the agency programs as the assistance of community volunteers is vital to the success of these programs. The training manual could also be used by other agencies involved in the field of youth justice as several of them have community volunteer participation.
It is hypothesized that, by creating a volunteer training manual, volunteers will become more familiar with, and confident in, using various strategies for identifying and addressing challenging behaviours, resulting in overall improved volunteer training and performance.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Youth Diversion

Traditionally, juvenile detention has been used as the primary method of addressing young offenders and their behaviours (Hamilton, Sullivan, Veysey, & Grille, 2007). Today, diversion programs are the more commonly used, less costly, alternative in the youth justice system (Hamilton et al., 2007; Nowakoski & Mattern, 2014). Diversion programs are designed to be an alternative way for a young person to make amends to the community and the victims involved in each case (Wilson & Hoge, 2013).

Youth diversion programs were created in response to an increase in juvenile crime, and the ineffectiveness of the traditional detention system (Cocozza et al., 2005). Traditional detention systems have been shown to often be ineffective as the use can result in a person being negatively labelled, decreased access to community social norms, increased feelings of alienation, and a decrease in self-esteem (Cocozza et al., 2005; Hamilton et al., 2007; Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Diversion programs were designed to help reduce some of these effects, and in turn help reduce rates of juvenile crime (Hamilton et al., 2007). Diversion programs rely on the services available within a community, and such services are utilized to address the multiple problems a youth may present (Cocozza et al., 2005). The main purpose of youth diversion programs is to reduce costs and negative stigma that come with juvenile detention, increase the health and well-being of young offenders and their families, and tailor treatments to the specific and unique needs of each individual (Hamilton et al., 2007).

Although diversion programs are designed to achieve similar results, they can vary in many ways (Cocozza et al., 2005; Hamilton et al., 2007; Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Wilson and Hoge (2013) state that diversion programs can differ in type, structure and content. While some programs involve intense interventions, others simply involve surveillance (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). These differences are meant to help individualize treatment and the approach used for addressing delinquent behaviour. Cocozza et al. (2005) support this by stating that many youth who are arrested present varying problems such as substance abuse, poor academic performance, and unhealthy home environments. These varying problems require individualized treatments and cannot all be addressed in the same way.

One way in which programs may differ is the point of contact at which youth are diverted (Cocozza et al., 2005). This means that a youth may be diverted from the system either pre-charge or post-charge (Cocozza et al., 2005). Pre-charge diversions are for low risk offenders, and take place after initial contact with the police has been made, and before any charges have been laid (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). After successful completion of the program, the youth would have no further involvement with the court or the police, in regards to the related incident (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Post-charge programs occur after a charge has been laid, and either the police or the court has decided to divert the youth (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Similar to pre-charge programs, no further proceedings would take place, and charges are typically dropped, after successful completion of a diversion program (Wilson & Hoge, 2013). Along with avoiding further proceedings, the successful completion of pre- and post-charge programs typically results in the absence of a juvenile criminal record (Wilson & Hoge, 2013).

Another variation in programs is the focus, or content, of each (Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Nowakoski & Mattern, 2014). Due to the unique differences and needs of each youth, programs must be tailored to each individual (Colwell, Villarreal, & Espinosa, 2012; Hamilton et al., 2007). Differences in programs may include reconciliation and/or compensation, case
management, counselling, improving academic performance and attendance, addressing substance use, mental health concerns, emotional and/or behavioural disorders, functional impairments, family dynamic, trauma, and improving decision-making skills (Cocozza et al., 2005; Colwell et al., 2012; Dembo et al., 2012; Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Hamilton et al., 2007; Nowakoski & Mattern, 2014). A focus on these needs, in addition to the attention from the justice system, serves as an added benefit for youth (Cocozza et al., 2005).

Although diversion programs may differ in terms of focus and content, they all aim to reduce justice system costs, decrease involvement with the law, as well as reduce negative stigma and strain that is placed on a young person, and their family (Cocozza et al., 2005, Hamilton et al., 2007; Wilson & Hoge, 2013). To be included in a diversion program however, individuals must first take responsibility for their actions, as well agree to take part in the program (Wilson & Hoge, 2013).

Diversion programs have been shown to be successful and effective in many cases (Colwell et al., 2012; Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Jordan et al., 2013; Wilson & Hoge, 2013). McAra and McVie (2007) found that recidivism rates were lowest in youth who were diverted from the judicial system, compared to those who were not diverted. They also stated that those who were diverted from the judicial system fastest were more likely to be successful. However, factors such as prior arrests, mental health, substance abuse, and poor school attendance can hinder the individual’s ability to successfully complete a youth diversion program (Nowakoski & Mattern, 2014). It is important for diversion programs to address these factors in order to ensure success. The traditional detention system is typically unable to address these needs or manage multiple, complex problems that a youth may exhibit (Colwell et al., 2012). As such, diversion programs often involve making external referrals to community services in order to target multiple problems (Hamilton et al., 2007). A program’s effectiveness relies on its ability to identify and address the unique and specific needs of each individual and provide them with the appropriate treatments (Hamilton et al., 2007).

When looking at mental health in particular, the traditional system is typically unequipped to address mental health concerns, and individuals will often continue to be involved in the system, due to non-compliance and other preventable problems (Colwell et al., 2012). The use of specialized supervision through a diversion program has been shown to be more effective for individuals with mental health as there was an increase in both participation in programs, and in access to various services (Colwell et al., 2012). Mental health is especially important to address as 50% to 75% of young offenders present with mental health concerns, compared to non-offenders in which 9% to 20% of the population are affected (Colwell et al., 2012).

In a study conducted by Jordan et al. (2013) it was found that the use of a voluntary, solution-focused, in-community treatment resulted in improvements to clients’ mental health, hope, and problem-solving skills. In the same study, a decrease in aggression and substance use was also noted. Jordan et al. (2013) found that an added benefit to program success was a reduction in recidivism rates for participants.

Overall, diversion programs have been shown to be more effective, and a more preferred alternative, to the use of traditional juvenile detention, for low risk young offenders (Colwell et al., 2012; Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Jordan et al., 2013; Nowakoski & Mattern, 2014; Wilson & Hoge, 2013). It has been shown that youth who are placed in diversion programs, and processed outside of the court system, are more likely to receive individualized treatment plans, more likely to avoid receiving a juvenile criminal record, and less likely to re-offend. The importance of the use of youth diversion programs is highlighted throughout the literature. The positive outcomes
that have been described show that youth diversion should be considered, when possible, over processing youth through the judicial system.

**Behaviour Management**

When looking at behaviour management, there are a few things that should be considered. One of the most important things to consider is the relationship between client and assigned staff members (Berry et al., 2012; Colwell et al., 2012; Parsonson, 2012; Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, & Stitcher, 2008). This can include the relationship between a young offender and their probation officer (Colwell et al., 2012), or a nurse and a patient (Berry et al., 2012), or a teacher and a student (Parsonson, 2012; Sutherland et al., 2008).

When examining the relationship between an offender and their probation officer, Colwell, Villarreal, and Espinosa (2012) stated there are two types of officers; the first is an officer who is specially trained and has an understanding of the offender, and who uses a social control approach to supervising an individual; the second is an officer who is not specially trained in understanding offenders, and who uses the approach of rule enforcement. When comparing the two types of officers, Colwell et al. (2012) stated that the specially trained officers were more successful in building positive relationships and experiences with those they were supervising than the officers who were not specially trained. Establishing a positive relationship is important, as individuals who had a positive experience under their supervision had more successful completions, with less violations and more rule-following, than those who had negative experiences and/or relationships (Colwell et al., 2012).

Many clients, in places such as long-term care facilities, often display challenging behaviours such as poor engagement in activities, violence, aggression, and self-harm (Berry et al., 2012). In this case, the relationship between a worker and a client is once again very important (Berry et al., 2012). Establishing a positive relationship with a client can enhance one’s understanding of that individual (Berry et al., 2012). This increases a worker’s ability to identify a client’s needs, how to support them, and how to work with the challenging behaviours they may present (Berry et al., 2012). It is also important to use effective communication, be supportive, and be accepting of clients in order to ensure success (Dembo, Gulledge, Robinson, & Winters, 2011).

Allday and Pakurar (2007), O’Connor, Dearing, and Collins (2011), Parsonson (2012), and Sutherland et al. (2008) state that a positive teacher-student relationship is important for increasing on-task behaviour, and in turn decreasing disruptive behaviour. According to O’Connor, Dearing, and Collins (2011), disruptive behaviours that were displayed were often reinforced and maintained by poor student-teacher relationships. In a study conducted by Allday and Pakurar (2007), it was noted that a simple greeting and positive comment to each student, used as part of relationship building, was a successful strategy for increasing on-task behaviour. Allday and Pakurar (2007) noted that baseline measures of on-task behaviour were 45% prior to teachers greeting students individually, and increased to 75% after teachers began using the strategy. As stated by Parsonson (2012), interpersonal relationships between teachers and their students are meaningful and provide students with the reinforcer of positive teacher attention.

In an environment such as a classroom, behaviour management is extremely important to the success of students. Students who present learning and behavioural problems make it difficult for teachers to provide a classroom with instruction (Hirn & Park, 2012; Sutherland et al., 2008). Challenging behaviours presented in a classroom can lead to distractions and conflict that turn student attention away from learning (Parsonson, 2012). Many students in a classroom have a
variety of external factors that may be affecting their behaviour (Parsonson, 2012). It is important for teachers to consider these factors, and use simple strategies to avoid challenging behaviours (Parsonson, 2012). One strategy is to not be reactive when a challenging behaviour is presented (Obenchain & Taylor, 2005). All behaviours have a purpose and it is important to learn why the behaviour is occurring (Obenchain & Taylor, 2005). Struggles with behaviour management in schools are often a result of teachers misunderstanding the limitations and struggles of the students presenting with disruptive behaviour, and in turn becoming reactive (Obenchain & Taylor, 2005). Parsonson (2012) suggested that using clear, simple, consistent and fair rules, along with frequent praise, are useful strategies for decreasing challenging and disruptive behaviours. Parsonson (2012) also stated that increasing a student’s engagement in the classroom is another useful strategy. This may be achieved by asking students to write down answers on paper rather than responding verbally, changing the classroom seating arrangement, using direct and specific instructions, or increasing access to preferred activities (Parsonson, 2012). It is also important for teachers to help students develop self-management skills in order to assist them in taking greater responsibility for their actions and behaviours (Parsonson, 2012). Another effective strategy, presented by Parsonson (2012), is to have experienced teachers assist new teachers with behaviour management by role-modelling the use of various strategies. By building strong teacher-student relationships, using effective classroom rules, providing clear and specific instruction, and responding appropriately to various behaviours, learning and behavioural problems are likely to be more easily managed (Allday & Pakurar, 2007; Obenchain & Taylor, 2005; O’Connor et al., 2011; Parsonson, 2012; Sutherland et al., 2008).

**Worker Training**

The worker-client relationship is important in many situations. It is important for workers to understand the individuals they are working with and build rapport in order to maintain a positive relationship. In order for workers to understand their clients, receiving specialized training is a key component (Berry et al., 2012; Colwell et al., 2012; Farrell & Salmon, 2009; Obenchain & Taylor, 2005; Parsonson, 2012; Sutherland et al., 2008). Berry et al. (2012) stated that the use of training and supervision programs to help workers understand challenging behaviours, and effectively address them, is essential. Berry et al. (2012) described a training program for staff that focused on increasing awareness of external factors that may be contributing to the presence and reinforcement of challenging behaviours. Staff members were also asked to think about how significant life events, such as death or divorce, might be affecting a client’s behaviours. The training program described was shown to be useful and prompted future training programs and interventions that may help improve staff-client relationships.

In regards to a classroom environment, Obenchain and Taylor (2005) described how the use of pre-service training, along with on-going professional development, was key in assisting teachers manage challenging behaviours. Pre-service trainings and professional development could include strategies for building and maintaining positive student-teacher relationships, and understanding the function of behaviour (Obenchain & Taylor, 2005). According to Parsonson (2012), it is also important to educate teachers on looking at the environment as a possible problem, as children adapt and behave differently in certain places and/or situations. For example, if a student, who displays distracting behaviour, is seated next to another who displays the same behaviour, the seating arrangement may maintain the unwanted behaviour. In comparison, if an un-focused student is seated next to another who is typically on-task and hard working, the student may look to the other as a role model and mimic the desired behaviour. In
this situation, changing the environment (the seating arrangement) may help decrease maladaptive and disruptive behaviour.

Similarly, Farrell and Salmon (2009) described how nurses might believe that a certain behaviour is abnormal, aggressive, or intentional. However, they may fail to realize that such a behaviour may be normal for someone who is an unfamiliar situation or place. Farrell and Salmon (2009), also stated that by focusing on the client as the problem, it prevents a worker from taking proactive steps to prevent a behaviour from occurring in the first place. A study conducted by Woodcock (2013) discovered that teachers found the use of preventative, proactive strategies, along with praise and rewards was the most useful strategy for behaviour management.

Farrell and Salmon (2009) described a training model that focuses on a worker’s values, skills, and knowledge of various influences that effects behaviour. They stated that the severity of a behaviour is not often the problem but, rather, a worker’s ability, or feelings of ability, to manage the situation. Understanding and addressing challenging behaviours cannot be achieved by simply reading a manual or handbook (Farrell & Salmon, 2009). Workers need training and on-going support in order to help them manage challenging behaviours that they may encounter on a daily basis (Farrell & Salmon, 2009). Ling and Mak (2012) compliment the argument made by Farrell and Salmon (2009), by discussing that workers need continued training in order to improve and maintain overall quality of service. Farrell and Salmon (2009) described how providing staff with face-to-face specific training may aid staff in applying generic pre-service training skills to the challenges they face daily. Staff training needs to help workers understand how challenging behaviours can occur because of their relationship with a client, and help them learn how to apply their understanding of a challenging behaviour in order to help resolve an issue (Farrell & Salmon, 2009).

It is important, however, to understand that training cannot be expected to change an individual’s personal values, beliefs, or emotional reactions, but rather provide staff with skills to act professionally with clients despite their feelings (Farrell & Salmon, 2009). This means that staff should be trained to react only after they have assessed a situation, rather than acting without thinking about why a behaviour may be occurring (Farrell & Salmon, 2009). Proper education and training about challenging behaviours is most important in regards to understanding and responding to them appropriately (Forward, 2014).

Conclusion

Youth diversion is a more successful and preferable alternative to the traditional juvenile detention system. When working with young offenders, challenging behaviours are often presented as a result of external factors. The research reviewed acknowledged several strategies for addressing challenging behaviour, and the importance of training to do so. Trainings, such as the ones described above, may be appropriate for volunteers working with young offenders in terms of promoting awareness and understanding of individuals and their behaviours. With the use of training and behaviour management skills, youth diversion is likely to maintain its rates of success and be implemented with increasing frequency across communities.
Chapter III: Method

Rationale

The current project goal is to develop a training manual for community volunteers who will be interacting with at-risk youth between the ages of 12 and 17, and involved in the agency’s group programs. The need for a training manual was expressed verbally by agency staff members and through a file review of written feedback given by past agency volunteers. Staff member and volunteer feedback has indicated the need to improve and/or develop various components of the current volunteer training. In particular, behaviour management strategies are a component of training requiring the most attention. Observations of volunteer training and interactions within group sessions have identified other components of training, such as education on youth diversion and rapport building skills, which may also require attention.

Participants

The participants included in the current project are the agency staff members, and volunteers involved with group programs.

To be included as a participant individuals must work for, or be affiliated with the student researcher’s agency, and have some knowledge of, or experience with volunteering and the associated training. Participants will be excluded if they do not work for, or are not affiliated with the student researcher’s agency. They will also be excluded if they have no knowledge of, or experience with volunteering or the associated training.

Staff member participants will be recruited via email, and will be sent an online survey to complete on a voluntary basis (Appendix A). All staff members will be offered the opportunity to participate in providing feedback through an email invitation. Feedback from staff will be collected pre- and post-manual development using the online survey. The online survey to be used will allow staff members to provide feedback voluntarily and anonymously. Volunteer recruitment will be completed through agency procedures. The student researcher’s agency has procedures currently in place for recruiting volunteers for each group program, and feedback is currently requested by the agency to be collected on a weekly basis. Volunteers are provided with information about giving feedback, and forms are provided to do so by the agency for each week of the group program (Appendix B). Feedback is given voluntarily and anonymously.

Volunteer training is currently deemed mandatory for all new volunteers at the student researcher’s agency. The training manual that is to be developed will not be put into practice during the student researcher’s time at the agency. As a result of training being mandatory, the developed manual not being put into practice, and feedback being collected voluntarily and anonymously, informed consent was not required for the current project.

Materials

The manual will include the following main sections: An Overview of Youth Diversion; Roles and Responsibilities of the Volunteers; Challenging Behaviours that Might Occur; Why Challenging Behaviours Might be Occurring; Behaviour Management; Dealing with Resistance; Conflict Resolution; Building Rapport with Youth and Other Volunteers; Active Listening and Communication; Role-Plays and Scenarios; and Tips and Strategies for Being a Volunteer.

The listed sections will provide volunteers with an overview of what youth diversion is, including its purpose, importance, and their role as a volunteer, as well as an overview of various challenging behaviours and how to address them. The manual will also provide volunteers with
tips for building rapport with youth, various scenarios to practice managing a challenging behaviour or situation, and general tips for being a volunteer.

Setting and Apparatus

Volunteer training currently takes place at both agency office locations, and will continue to take place at the same locations with the new manual. Volunteer training is currently one session that is two and a half hours in length. There is no discussion at the agency at the present time to change the session number or length. The manual that is to be developed will not be put into practice, however if it were to be used, training would be presented through Microsoft PowerPoint slides based on the manual content, handouts, group discussions, group activities, and behavioural scenarios. A copy of the manual would also be distributed to each volunteer for their keeping. Volunteer training content would include material from both the current volunteer training and new manual. Training sessions would take place before a new group program began. This would ideally be once in the spring, summer, and fall. Training is mandatory for new volunteers and will be offered as a refresher for returning volunteers.

Procedure

Feedback from staff members will be collected both pre- (Appendix A) and post-manual development (Appendix C). Pre-manual development feedback will be based on the current volunteer training manual and training sessions. Staff will be asked to provide feedback on current training procedures and the content included. Pre-manual development feedback will also include a section for staff to leave comments on topics not included in the survey questions. Post-manual development feedback will differ slightly, as the survey questions will be based on the new manual that is to be developed. Questions will be based on the manual’s user friendliness, visual appeal, content, the potential for it to be put into practice by the agency, and improvements and/or changes that could be made.

Feedback from volunteers will be collected on a weekly basis using the feedback forms already in place by the agency (Appendix B). Feedback forms are offered to the volunteers at the end of each program session and are completed voluntarily and anonymously.

Informed consent procedures are not required for the current project as the manual will not be put into practice during the student researcher’s time at the agency. The current project will only require the collection of feedback that will be given anonymously and on a voluntary basis. Staff and volunteers have been made aware of the use of their feedback, and those who provide feedback will be agreeing to its’ use. The executive director, volunteer/program coordinator, and student researcher are the only individuals who will have access to the feedback collected from volunteers. Feedback collected from staff will only be accessed by the student researcher and executive director.

Collection of feedback from volunteers will begin during the first week of programs and will continue until the last session of each. Pre-manual development feedback from staff members will be collected between Week 8 and Week 10 of the student researcher’s placement, and post-manual development feedback will be collected between Week 13 and Week 14. There are no intervention procedures in place for the current project as the manual will not be put into practice due to time constraints.
Evaluation

Weekly volunteer feedback will be collected on an on-going basis through the use of forms already in place by the agency (Appendix B). The results from the feedback will be displayed through a bar graph as to compare results from week-to-week. After the final group session takes place, volunteers will be asked to provide specific feedback on improvements that could be made to the training or to the program in general.

Staff member feedback will be collected pre-manual development (Appendix A) and post-manual development (Appendix C). This feedback will be collected through an online survey created by the student researcher. Pre-manual development questions included are based on current training procedures and content, as well as areas to improve and/or develop. Post-manual development feedback will include questions based on the visual appeal, user-friendliness, content, and ability to be used by the agency in the future. Staff will also be given the opportunity to provide feedback on improvement and/or changes that could be made to the manual before putting it into practice. The feedback collected from staff will also be displayed through a bar graph as to display the responses to the online survey. Similar questions from pre- and post-manual development surveys will be directly compared as to note improvements made with the new manual.

It is expected that positive feedback from staff will increase from pre- to post-manual development. It is also expected that, if the new manual were to be put into practice, that overall positive feedback from volunteers would also increase.
Chapter IV: Results

Staff Member Pre-Manual Development Feedback Survey Results

Staff members of the agency were asked to voluntarily and anonymously complete a pre-manual development feedback survey (Appendix A). The survey was created and distributed using an online survey creator. The survey was designed to provide staff members with an opportunity to share their input on the manual content. A variety of topics were provided to choose from, with the opportunity to choose multiple answers, as well as a comment box to include additional optional material not provided. Staff members were also asked for their input on how long they thought volunteer training should be. There was a total of five respondents to the survey and a complete display of results can be found in Appendix D. Overall, the results of the survey included the following: all topics listed as an option to include in the manual, apart from two, were chosen to be seen included in the manual. Also, most respondents felt it would be beneficial to include an orientation to the agency for all new volunteers as part of training. In regards to an appropriate length of time for volunteer training, three respondents agreed that between two and three hours were appropriate, while the remaining two respondents thought that a half-day training would be beneficial. One respondent also suggested the idea of providing refreshment training to volunteers as needed. Finally, additional comments included providing general tips and strategies to volunteers, as well as including training on working with others and their, beliefs, views, and/or values.

Staff Member Post-Manual Development Feedback Survey Results

A post-manual development feedback survey (Appendix C) was distributed to agency staff members in the same manner as the pre-manual development survey. This survey included questions on the presentation and content of the manual. It also included a comment box for additional changes and/or improvements that staff would like made to the manual. No agency staff members completed the feedback survey so there are no results to report.

Weekly Volunteer Feedback Responses

Each week volunteers of the group programs were asked to anonymously complete feedback forms (Appendix B). These feedback forms were designed by the agency and allow volunteers to express their feelings about the group members, the content covered, the program coordinator, as well as providing them with the opportunity to express concerns. Overall, most volunteers completed the form each week, however, there were a few who did not. Feedback results generally revealed that volunteers were satisfied with the group content, working with the group members, and displayed few or no concerns. Complete results for questions one through eight on the feedback form can be found in Appendix E. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, volunteer feedback was unable to be collected post-manual development.

Volunteer Training Manual

A major result of the presenting project was the development of a volunteer training manual (Appendix F). The training manual includes several topics that will provide community volunteers with a general knowledge of the agency and its’ programs, how to work with at-risk youth and other volunteers, as well as general policies and procedures. The manual includes strategies for conflict resolution, rapport building, active listening and communication, dealing with resistance, working with varied personalities and needs, as well as role-plays and scenarios...
to help enhance volunteer performance and skills. The manual is designed to be user friendly, visually appealing, and relevant to the work volunteers will be doing with the student researcher’s agency. The completed manual can be found in Appendix F.
Chapter V: Discussion

Overview

A local agency serving at-risk youth identified the need for a training manual for volunteers working with their youth. After a review of the current volunteer training handbook, previous volunteer feedback, and the literature relating to agency services, a training manual was developed.

Pre- and post-manual development feedback surveys were distributed, on-line, to all agency staff members in order to collect concrete feedback on what areas of training required improvement and/or development. Volunteer feedback, previously collected by the agency, was reviewed to gain a better understanding of how prepared for group lessons volunteers felt after receiving training. A review of the current volunteer handbook took place in order to evaluate the current material in place for volunteer training. Agency staff member feedback and a review previous volunteer feedback current handbook all indicated gaps in volunteer training, particularly in regards to behaviour management, rapport building strategies, and conflict resolution skills.

After assessing the current volunteer training, a new volunteer training manual was created. A review of relevant literature was used to inform the development of the new material. Some of the material in the existing training was retained as it was still supported by the literature and identified as useful through the feedback surveys. The new volunteer training manual includes information on topics such as the roles and responsibilities of the volunteers, duty to report serious occurrences and abuse, how to build rapport with youth and other volunteers, and how to interact with youth with various personalities and needs. The manual also includes strategies for working with challenging behaviours, dealing with resistance, resolving conflict, and general tips and strategies for being a volunteer. Unfortunately due to time constraints and the scheduled times for volunteer training, the new manual could not be used prior to the end of the student’s placement.

Strengths

The development of a new training manual for volunteers of the student researcher’s agency presents several strengths. The new manual fills in gaps left by the current training in the agency. Volunteers will now be provided with several strategies for working with various behavioural issues, will likely be able to resolve conflict more easily, and will be able to build stronger rapport by utilizing agency services and skills for meeting the needs of each youth. The new manual is also designed to be user friendly and be used as a take-home resource for volunteers. Volunteers will be able to keep a copy of the training manual and use it as a reference during their time with the agency. The manual is divided into well-organized sections, allowing specific topics to be easily found. Also provided in the manual are various role-play scenarios for volunteers to discuss and work through together to practice difficult interaction with the youth. Many of the role-plays were designed after observations of various group programs, resulting in realistic written scenarios. The manual is also designed to be general in content so that it may be used by any agency that has volunteers who work with at-risk youth. Although the manual is designed to help volunteers working in group settings, the content can be applied to working with individuals as well.
Limitations

Although the manual was completed successfully, there were some limitations to the project. A major limitation was the inability to pilot the new training manual. This occurred because agency volunteer training had been previously scheduled to take place at the beginning of the student’s placement. This limitation prevented the implementation of the training manual and its subsequent evaluation. For the purpose of the project, the new manual only had the potential to be evaluated on its user friendliness, visual appeal, and written content. This limitation also prevented any major changes from being made to the manual. Another limitation to the project was the type of feedback collected from volunteers. As the agency already had a feedback collection procedure in place, only a limited amount of feedback relevant to volunteer training was able to be collected. The agency feedback form had only a few questions regarding training received and each volunteer’s feelings of preparedness for participating in the group. If a new feedback form were to be designed, more questions could be specific to this topic. Some information that would have been useful to collect might be volunteers’ ratings on the strengths or weakness of specific areas of training. Learning the volunteers’ opinions on the specific areas of training would have been useful in the development and improvement of the manual. Lastly, a limitation that was noted at the end of the project was the lack of responses received from staff members for the post-manual development feedback survey. Due to the busy nature of the agency’s work, staff members were unable to provide feedback and comments on the manual prior to the end of the student researcher’s placement. Organizing a feedback session for a staff meeting in order to receive such comments would have allowed for more changes to be made to the manual.

Multilevel Challenges to Service Implementation

Several lessons were learned during the student researcher’s time at the agency. One lesson learned was the importance of allowing for flexibility in one’s schedule. Although the agency was smaller in size comparatively to other agencies, each staff member had a different schedule and different workloads, which proved to be a challenge at times when trying to organize meetings. It quickly became clear that schedules had to be made in advance and could often change last minute due to clients’ needs. Having a flexible schedule was often the only way to make things work with everyone at the agency.

Another lesson learned was that various professionals, such as lawyers, police officers, and school board members, had different opinions on how to approach or manage a given situation compared to those of a caseworker at the student researcher’s agency. Many professionals who interact with youth have different perspectives on, and interactions with each individual. Varying staff members may have heard information on the youth in the agency. With many professionals expressing different opinions about each youth, it was often difficult to make an action plan or set goals for each individual. Learning to accept others’ opinions and take each into consideration was a challenging, yet very beneficial, lesson to learn.

A difficult lesson learned was allowing one’s success to depend on someone else. The success of the work performed at the student researcher’s agency solely depends on the youth accessing the services. The staff members at the agency simply provide the tools, strategies, and foundations for a youth to succeed in their action plan. Youth are given the choice to complete tasks and/or group programs to decrease their involvement with the justice system, however their success of completing such tasks and programs depends on their choices and actions. This means
that a caseworker’s success, i.e. decreasing youth involvement with the law, is dependent on the individual youth. This lesson was the most difficult and challenging to both learn and accept.

**Contributions to the Behavioural Psychology Field**

The current project demonstrates several benefits to both the student researcher’s agency and the student researcher. Some benefits to the agency include filling in gaps in volunteer training and presenting information in a clear, concise, and visually appealing presentation. Current volunteer training material has been combined with new material in one easy-to-use manual. The manual has been made available to all staff and laid out in such a way that any agency staff member would be able to facilitate the training. Another benefit to the agency is that the materials included in the manual have been based not only on current agency material, but on relevant literature. This ensures that the material presented is recent and up-to-date. The new training manual is intended to improve volunteer performance, and with improved volunteer performance it is believed that the overall success of group programs would also improve. Community volunteers are a crucial component of the agency’s group programs, and designing an in-depth training manual to help improve their work with youth is beneficial to the agency.

A benefit of the project for the student researcher was the experience gained from working with both staff members and community volunteers. Agency staff members were familiar with the agency’s work and were able to provide some strategies for working with youth based on their experiences. All staff members shared different strategies as they had all had very different interactions with youth. It was beneficial to see varying aspects of the agency’s work and be able to incorporate many of the different strategies learned into the manual. It was also beneficial to be able to work with different community volunteers and be able to learn about each of their experiences working with youth. Some volunteers had previous experience working with youth and were able to share those experiences with the student researcher, as well as other volunteers in the group. Other volunteers had not worked with youth before and it was interesting to see how they interacted with the youth. Interacting with and learning from both staff members and volunteers allowed for the training manual to be tailored to the agency’s needs.

**Future Recommendations**

A recommendation for future projects similar to this would be to work more closely with agency staff members and volunteers when gathering information to include in a manual and when designing the manual. Although a large amount of information, input, and feedback was collected from staff members and volunteers, organizing more time to work directly with them during the manual development process may have been of benefit. Organizing greater staff collaboration may also have provided more of an opportunity to receive feedback on the manual, post-manual development. Another recommendation would be to get in contact with other agencies providing similar or related services, and to study their methods of training community volunteers. Contacting other agencies may have helped highlight other gaps in the training currently in place. Studying and adapting some of the training practices of other agencies may have helped to further develop new content for the manual.
References


Appendix A
Staff Member Pre-Manual Development Feedback Survey

Feedback Survey
Please complete the following survey to provide feedback on the current volunteer training provided to volunteers of group programs.

1. Do you feel it would be helpful to have an orientation to welcome all new volunteers to the agency? (For all programs that involve the use of volunteers)
   - Yes
   - No

   If yes, what information do you feel would be important to cover?

2. What do you feel would be the most important topics to cover during volunteer training for Rebound/Rebound Choices? (Please check all that apply)
   - An overview of youth diversion and the Youth Justice Committee
   - An overview of the various programs we offer, that volunteers are a part of
   - An overview of how to support youth with varied personalities and needs
   - How to interact with different types of youth
   - How to build rapport with youth
   - Providing examples of challenging behaviours that might occur (ex: yelling, texting, talking out of turn)
   - How to address challenging behaviours appropriately
   - Providing reasons for why a challenging behaviour may be occurring (ex: why a youth may be ignoring instructions, or why a youth may be throwing an object)
   - Providing information on what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable from youth (ex: when doodling or playing with Play-Doh is acceptable/unacceptable)
   - Providing role-plays/case scenarios for volunteers to practice managing a difficult situation and/or behaviour
   - Provide skills for active listening and communication
   - Providing skills for dealing with resistance
   - An overview of duty to report, including the importance of communicating concerns for a youth with the coordinator
   - Providing skills for conflict resolution (i.e. helping volunteers and youth to support one another and get along)
   - Providing de-escalation techniques
   - Providing an outline of the volunteer role and responsibilities

Please comment if there is any additional information you think may be important to discuss during training.
3. What do you feel would be an appropriate time length for training volunteers for Rebound/Rebound Choices? (ex: 2 hours)

4. Do you feel it would be important to provide volunteers with Tips & Strategies for being a volunteer (ex: encouraging them to talk to other volunteers, encouraging them to bring up any concerns, etc.)

5. Please comment if there is any additional information you feel would be important to cover during volunteer training, if not already mentioned above.
**Appendix B**
**Volunteer Feedback Form**

Session Date ______________
Program Coordinator ____________________

**WEEKLY VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK FORM**
Please take a moment to complete this form. These forms will be reviewed weekly by the program team in order to improve your volunteer experiences, address any issues that may arise and improve on volunteer training programs. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoyed working with the youth today.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did you feel prepared in supporting the youth at your table? (i.e. redirection, bringing concerns to Program Coordinator, asking for extra assistance, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The training I received helped me feel prepared for today's lesson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I felt that my feedback and input was appreciated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Program Coordinator provided me with useful suggestions when I asked for assistance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I enjoyed working with the Program Coordinator today</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I felt safe to share my concerns with the Program Coordinator</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am looking forward to next week's session</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Do you have any concerns with how today’s session went?

10. Was there something at today’s session that you felt went particularly well?

11. Do you have any other comments or concerns?

(Optional):
**Please select one of the following options**
I would like the _______ to follow up with me on my feedback before next session
  - Program Coordinator
  - Volunteer Coordinator
  - Volunteer and Program Coordinator
  - Neither

If you selected that you would like to have someone contact you or follow-up, please put your name and number here, or you may leave this section blank if you do not require a follow-up contact.

Name: ___________________  Number: ___________________

--------TO BE COMPLETED ONLY FOR FINAL SESSION--------

12. Do you have any suggestions for improving the program?

13. Do you have any recommendations for how to improve the volunteer training to help you feel more prepared?

Thank you!
Appendix C
Staff Member Post-Manual Development Feedback Survey

Feedback Survey
Please complete the following survey to provide feedback on the recently developed volunteer training manual.

1. The new volunteer training manual would be a beneficial source to use during volunteer training.
   o Strongly agree
   o Agree
   o Disagree
   o Strongly disagree
   o Not sure

2. The new volunteer training manual appears to: (Check all that apply)
   o Be user friendly
   o Be visually appealing
   o Be practical, and has the potential to be used for volunteer training
   o Be informative on topics relevant to volunteers (Example: roles and responsibilities, building rapport, interacting with youth, identifying and addressing challenging behaviours, etc.)
   o Be appropriate for the agency and its’ intended use
   o Be well written
   o Be a good tool for volunteers to keep and continue using during their time at the agency
   o Be up-to-date on agency policies, procedures, and expectations
   o Be appropriate in terms of content
   o Cover all topics that are important for volunteers to be trained on
   o Meet the needs of both the program coordinator and volunteers

3. The new volunteer training manual will need some revision and editing before being used.
   o Strongly agree
   o Agree
   o Disagree
   o Strongly disagree
   o Not sure
4. Having a new volunteer training manual designed was beneficial to the agency, the program coordinator, and/or the volunteers.
   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree
   - Not sure

5. Please comment on the improvements and/or changes you would like to see be made to the new volunteer training manual. Please also include any other comments you may have.
Appendix D
Staff Member Pre-Manual Development Feedback Survey Results

Total number of respondents: 5

1. Do you feel it would be beneficial to have an orientation to welcome all new volunteers to the agency? (For all programs that involve the use of volunteers.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer choices</th>
<th>Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. What do you feel would be the most important topics to cover during volunteer training for group programs? (Please check all that apply.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer choices</th>
<th>Responses (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An overview of youth diversion and the Youth Justice Committee</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overview of the various programs we offer, that volunteers are a part of</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overview of how to support youth with varied personalities and needs</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to interact with different types of youth</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to build rapport with youth</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing examples of challenging behaviours that might occur (ex: yelling, texting, talking out of turn)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to address challenging behaviours appropriately</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing reasons for why a challenging behaviour may be occurring (ex: why a youth may be ignoring instructions, or why a youth may be throwing an object)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing information on what behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable from youth (ex: when doodling or playing with Play-Doh is acceptable/unacceptable)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing role-plays/case scenerios for volunteers to practice managing a difficult situation and/or behaviour</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide skills for active listening and communication</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing skills for dealing with resistance</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overview of duty to report, including</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the importance of communicating concerns for a youth with the coordinator

Providing skills for conflict resolution (i.e. helping volunteers and youth to support one another and get along) 100

Providing de-escalation techniques 100

Providing an outline of the volunteer role and responsibilities 100

3. What do you feel would be an appropriate time length for training volunteers for group programs? (ex: 2 hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses (open answers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-day training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5-3 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ day training with follow up training opportunities available on an on-going basis – i.e. once a month drop in around a particular topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same time frame as program (2.5 hours)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Do you feel it would be important to provide volunteers with tips and strategies for being a volunteer? (Ex: encouraging them to talk to other volunteers, encouraging them to bring up any concerns, etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses (open answers)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the more info/strategies they have, the more comfortable they will be while volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, the more information and support provided the better success they will have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes please!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of course!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Please comment if there is any additional information you feel would be important to cover during volunteer training, of not already mentioned above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses (open answers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How the work they do can make a positive impact, how they can actually make a difference and help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different personalities peer to volunteer as well as volunteer to volunteer, respect each other’s opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs to be fun and engaging. Different activities not just lecture – encourage feedback and experiences from participants. I have found it helpful to being experienced volunteers into the training for new volunteers.</td>
</tr>
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Appendix E
Weekly Volunteer Feedback Responses

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<td>Question 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
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<td>Question 6</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Question 8</td>
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<td>Question 6</td>
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<td>Question 7</td>
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<td>Question 8</td>
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</table>

Week #: 8

| Question 1 | 6  |
| Question 2 | 1  | 5 |
| Question 3 | 1  | 5 |
| Question 4 | 6  |
| Question 5 | 6  |
| Question 6 | 6  |
| Question 7 | 1  | 5 |
| Question 8 | 6  |
Appendix F
Volunteer Training Manual

(Continued on following page)
Volunteer Training Manual

For Group Programs

Developed by: Brittany Yourth
St. Lawrence College – Kingston
BAA Behavioural Psychology
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Serious Occurrence Reporting And Duty To Report .............................. 6
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Youth diversion is an alternative to processing youth through the traditional judicial system.

Youth, between the ages of 12 and 17, who have become involved with the law are given an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions, make amends to the community and victims, and move forward.

Youth diversion programs are completed voluntarily, and can be completed either pre- or post-charge.

Typically, a diversion is the completion of an agreed upon sanction between a youth and a caseworker. Sanctions can include, but are not limited to, one or more of following:

- Volunteer hours in the community
- Letter of apology
- Participation in a group program
- Attending school
- Attending counselling
- Restitution

With youth diversion, the unique and specific needs of each individual, such as mental health, are taken into consideration.

Youth diversion has been shown to be successful in many communities, and community volunteers are a crucial component to the success and continuation of programs.
AN OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS OFFERED

The listed programs are those that require community volunteers:

**Rebound**
An 8-week, strength-based, group program for youth ages 12 – 17, that focuses on life skills with lessons tailored to the needs of individuals taking part. Youth taking part in the program are those from the community who require support in developing various skills to make positive changes in their lives. Typically there are 6 – 12 youth per group, and each lesson is 2.5 hours long. Rebound is currently run as an evening program out of both RNJ offices.

*Lesson topics may include, but are not limited to:*
  - Communication
  - Decision Making
  - Goal Setting
  - Teamwork
  - Anger Management
  - Bullying & Cyber Bullying

**Rebound Choices**
A 10-week program for youth ages 12 – 17, that teaches life skills with a focus on drugs and alcohol. Rebound Choices is designed as a proactive program to provide education to youth. Typically there are 6 – 12 youth per group, and each lesson is 2 hours long. Choices is currently run as a day program through various schools in the community.

*Lesson topics include:*
  - Communication
  - Decision Making
  - Goal Setting
  - Alcohol
  - Marijuana & Coping Skills
  - Relationships
  - Prescription Drugs
  - Self-Respect/Self-Esteem
  - Risk-taking & Social Media
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VOLUNTEERS

• Look for strengths in each individual youth and help that youth build on those strengths

• Encourage youth to be open and independent, to be respectful and accept themselves, their situation and others around them

• Contribute to a positive experience for the youth
  • Facilitate table discussions
    o Engage the youth at your table, encourage their participation, discuss topics, and help in the completion of activities given by the lead coach
  • Keep the table focused
    o Manage youths’ behaviour and try to keep conversations and actions at the table relevant to the topic being discussed
  • Follow the rules of the group
  • Participate in activities and volunteer, keeping in mind to not take over for the youth

• Encourage youth to respond in a positive and productive manner
  • Manage negative comments, ideas, etc.

• Build a trusting relationship with the youth at your table, as well as those at other tables
  • Build rapport

• Provide encouragement to the youth
  • Be their cheerleader

• Be a positive role model

• Provide support to other volunteers and coaches
• Provide feedback to, and have open communication with the program coordinator
  • Discuss any concerns that may be at the table, in the group as a whole, with other youth, or with other volunteers
  • Report any concerning behaviour to the program coordinator
  • Report complaints and concerns to the program coordinator

• Discuss minor behaviour problems with the youth themselves
  • If the misbehaviour of a youth is minor, discuss it with them first before bringing it to the attention of the lead coach or program coordinator

• Guarantee confidentiality

• Be familiar with agency policies and procedures, and be willing to follow them

• Be prepared to work with young people, in a friendly, trusting atmosphere

• Maintain the dignity and integrity of RNJ Youth Services

• Be respectful of other volunteers and their opinions, beliefs, values, etc.

• Do not engage in any physical contact with a youth

• Be willing to learn and participate in on-going training sessions

• Do not transport a youth under any circumstances

• Do not disclose personal information to youth
  • Ex: Phone numbers, addresses, email addresses

• Know your duty to report

• Keep personal problems and differences to yourself
  • You are here for the youth, and only the youth
SERIOUS OCCURRENCE REPORTING AND DUTY TO REPORT

Serious Occurrence

• Reporting – Serious Occurrence Report is to be completed immediately after:
  o The death of a young person or employee participating in service
  o Any serious injury to a young person or employee which occurs while participating in service
  o Any disaster, such as a fire, on the premises where a service is being provided
  o Any major disturbances, such as a riot or hostage taking
  o Any media reports referencing a Youth Justice young person or a Youth Justice funded service

• Procedure – For any serious occurrences listed above, the following reporting requirements are mandatory:
  1. Reports:
     A. Serious Occurrence Initial Notification Report
     B. Serious Occurrence Inquiry Report
     C. Annual Summary and Analysis Form
  2. Telephone: The executive director needs to be notified immediately. The Ministry needs to be contacted at 1-888-123-4567 and the executive director will notify all board members.
  3. Fax: Reports must be faxed within one hour to the appropriate Ministry regional office and to the Information Management Unit
  4. Notification to the Parent/Guardian: This must be reported as soon as possible following the Serious Occurrence but no later than 24 hours after the serious occurrence.

• Other Occurrences may include the following:
  o The attempted suicide of a young person
  o Allegations against staff of abuse or mistreatment of a client
  o Serious complaints made by a young person
  o Serious complaints made about a young person (i.e. disclosure of offences committed)
  o Serious breaches of confidentiality
Reporting Abuse

- **Duty to Report** – Any professional/volunteer who, in the course of his/her duties with respect to a child, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been abused or is at risk of being abused or neglected has a legal obligation under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) to immediately report his/her suspicions directly to the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) (CFSA, S. 72(1)).

- **Duty to Report Directly** – Under the amendments to the Act, the individual staff member/volunteer who suspects abuse or neglect must contact CAS directly, thus supervisors cannot call on a staff member or a volunteer’s behalf.
  - “A person who has a duty to report a matter under subsection (1) and (2) shall make the report directly to the Society and shall not rely on any other person to report on his or her behalf.” (CFSA, S. 72 (3)).
  - While the professional/volunteer may discuss their situation with a supervisor, the onus remains on the person who suspects abuse to report the matter promptly to the CAS (CFSA, S. 72 (3)).
  - If the supervisor disagrees with the employee/volunteers decision to report, it is still the employee’s/volunteer’s responsibility to report his/her suspicions of abuse or neglect to CAS.

- **On-going Duty to Report** – Under the amendments to the Act, professionals must report each additional suspicion of occurrence of abuse or neglect regarding the same child to CAS.

  “A person who has additional reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is in need of protection shall make further report even if he/she has made previous reports with respect to the same child.” (CFSA, S. 72 (2)).

Disclosing Personal Information

- No volunteer of the agency should under any circumstances disclose personal information to a client, such as: phone numbers, email addresses, or addresses. It is against our policies and procedures to communicate with clients outside of the agency. Please use a need-to-know basis when discussing personal stories, etc. with clients.
BUILDING RAPPORT WITH YOUTH AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS

Building rapport with youth and other volunteers is one of the first steps to building a working relationship, and the first step before being able to connect with those you are working with. Without building rapport it can be difficult to work with youth and other volunteers.

The following are some tips for building rapport with youth and other volunteers:

• Ask questions and take an interest in what the other person is saying
• Have open conversations
• Be open-minded to who the other person is and accept all youth for who they are, not what they have done
• Be sincere; don’t lie about being knowledgeable or interested in what they’re talking about, they will know!
• Be personable, approachable, and empathetic
• Greet the youth when they come into the room
• Give the youth or volunteer a compliment or start a conversation
• Be understanding
• Be concerned
• Consider the background the other may be coming from and think about how it may be influencing the way the act
• Provide encouragement
• Be a role model
• Don’t be reactive, be calm and professional when addressing a situation (talk to the person outside the room on break or after group)

• Know your limits as a person and as a volunteer of the agency

• Respect others’ opinions, values, and beliefs; you may not agree with them but it is important to recognize that everyone has their own

• Remember that you can’t change anyone or have an agenda for them

• Recognize that youth behave differently in different situations and settings (they adapt to fit in and fit their needs)

• Engage the youth in activities, in conversation, and with others

• Figure out who the youth are (are they quiet, shy, outgoing, social, etc.)

• Congratulate the youth on even the small accomplishments

• Recognize that certain behaviours may be normal for someone who is in an unfamiliar situation

• Focus on a youth’s strengths and assets

• Build rapport with all the youth and volunteers, not just the ones at your table

• Build rapport and team strength with other volunteers as to become one unit that can work together and support each other

• Maintain confidentiality

• Maintain and continue to build rapport for the duration of the group; don’t lose interest in them!

Remember that you are here for the youth and only the youth. Personal differences should be left at the door. Youth can feel animosity between volunteers and group members and this can hinder the rapport building process.
SUPPORTING YOUTH WITH VARIED PERSONALITIES AND NEEDS

Youth who attend group will present varying personalities and needs. It is important to recognize these differences and support the youth accordingly.

Supporting youth who are sullen, act out, are defiant, and often not worried about consequences:

- Avoid power struggles or confrontation, particularly in front of peers
- Avoid expressing shock or disgust as these youth are often looking for a reaction
- Stay calm and non-reactive and allow for natural consequences to occur
- Try to use actions over lecturing
- Use consistency and positive feedback
- Allow these youth to express their anger appropriately and engage them in activities that will result in something positive

Supporting youth who are quiet, distant, or shy:

- Provide activities that encourage creativity and imagination
- Provide encouragement and positive feedback directly to the youth in a non-public manner
- Do not pamper or “baby” the youth. Simply allow the youth the feel successful and empowered
- Use one-on-one conversations and encourage their strengths
- Show interest in them as individuals
- Help them to build positive peer relationships
Supporting youth who pride themselves on being humorous, social, defiant, and who struggle to take things seriously:

- These youth can often use their humour inappropriately or at inappropriate times so help the youth learn more appropriate times and uses for their humour
- Support them in expressing their feelings and managing their constant need for attention
- Allow for natural consequences to occur and support the youth in learning to better care for themselves
- Provide tasks that allow the youth to take responsibility and accountability
- Use direct eye contact and address inappropriate behaviour directly
- Be clear and consistent in your expectations and boundaries
ACTIVE LISTENING AND COMMUNICATION

Barriers to active listening:
Barriers can often occur when listening to another person. Focusing on what you should say next, trying to remember every little detail of what someone says, focusing on the person rather than the message, and being distracted by other noises in the room are often such barriers. Everyone experiences these barriers to some degree, however it is important to take note of these and be able to replace them with positive strategies of active listening.

Strategies for active listening:
• Encourage, clarify, restate, reflect, and validate are key components to active listening.
• Take a pause to focus on the person speaking, and focus on what they are saying and how they might be feeling. For the time the other person is speaking, give them your full attention, and put their concerns before your own.
• Observe the body language of the person speaking and pay attention to non-verbal cues they may be giving. Body language can often be more revealing of true feelings than words, and is important to take note of.
• Listen for details and main ideas when the other person is speaking. Picking up on key elements can help gain a better understanding of the “bigger picture” and may help to understand overall what the other is trying to say.
• Be calm and empathetic when listening to another speak. Provide validation and acknowledgement to what they are saying.
• If you do not understand what the person is talking about or what they are trying to tell you, ask questions to clarify.
Barriers to effective communication:
As with barriers occurring when trying to listen to another speak, the same can happen when trying to communicate. Barriers such as getting off topic, not understanding what someone is saying, not being clear in your message, jumping to conclusions or ignoring another person can hinder our abilities to effectively communicate with other people. It is important to be aware of these barriers and be able to use strategies of effective communication in their place.

Strategies for effective communication:
• Focus on the problem or issue at hand, rather than the person you are speaking with. Expressing your needs, wants, and opinions objectively and without taking things personally, can help solve the problem more effectively and quickly.
• Be honest and open when speaking to others.
• Be empathetic, understanding, and concerned for those you are communicating with. Becoming detached can make it difficult to build a working relationship and work together.
• Accept the views and opinions of others, even if they are different from your own.
• Be confident in your needs, wants, and opinions.
• Communicate with another as an equal. Do not assume superiority or power over the person you are trying to communicate with.
• Validate and acknowledge the thoughts, feelings, and views of the other person.
CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS THAT MIGHT OCCUR

- Poor engagement in activities
- Poor engagement with others
- Making inappropriate comments
  - Talking out of turn
  - Getting up out of seats
  - Not listening
  - Not paying attention
- Throwing things
  - Arguing
  - Bullying others
  - Yelling
  - Self-harm
  - Violence
  - Aggression

ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

It is expected that youth will have varied attention spans. Fidget toys, Play-Doh, and colouring sheets are put out to help keep the youth engaged. It is important to know that not all youth will be able to sit and pay attention for the entire group session.

Play-Doh or fidget toy play is acceptable if the youth is playing quietly while still engaged and paying attention to the group.

Play-Doh and fidget toys become unacceptable when the youth begins using them loudly, inappropriately (ex: throwing, using as weapon), or is no longer paying attention. When this happens, the object should be replaced with something quieter, taken away, or youth should be reminded to pay attention.
WHY CHALLENGING BEHAVIOURS MIGHT OCCUR

• Poor relationship(s) with another youth in the group
  o Past interactions between group members, and their relationship outside of group could play a role
  o If this is a problem, try changing the seating arrangement at the table or in the room

• Poor relationship(s) with volunteers
  o Could contribute to losing control of various situations
  o Little rapport with youth can make it difficult to understand how a youth will respond to you
  o Without a positive relationship, youth may not feel the need to respect or listen to a volunteer or group facilitator
  o Try building a stronger rapport with that youth, or maybe switch spots with the other volunteer(s) at your table

• Being in a new environment with new people
  o Youth may be feeling uncomfortable in a new situation and/or with new people
  o Behaviours could be a defense or coping mechanisms
  o Youth may change their behaviours in order to fit into their environment, and to fit their needs
  o Youth may also not have positive ways of expressing their feelings of insecurity, anger, sadness, etc.
  o Try to make the youth feel comfortable and encourage appropriate behaviour
• **Various coping mechanisms**
  o Youth will have different ways of expressing themselves and their feelings
  o For example, if a youth has low self-esteem they may act out as a way of building themselves up in front of others
  o Build rapport with the youth and encourage their strengths

• **Lack of boundaries at school/home**
  o Without consequences for not following boundaries, a youth may not know how to behave otherwise
  o Be firm, clear, consistent, and fair in boundaries that you set in group

• **Frustration**
  o Youth may act out in response to their frustration
  o Youth may not have developed positive coping strategies
  o Build rapport with youth as to learn their triggers, how to talk to them, and to build enough of a relationship where they can trust you to help

• **Anger management**
  o Youth may have difficulties managing their anger
  o It may be difficult for them to control their actions when they become angry if they have not developed positive coping strategies
  o Help teach the youth new strategies for addressing these feelings in a more positive way
  o You can also try removing the youth away from what is making them angry to let them calm down and be able to have a conversation

• **Impulse control**
  o Youth may have difficulties with impulse control and may not think before they act
  o Set boundaries, be consistent in them, and be clear in your expectations
BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

• Build rapport with the youth! Get to know them, make a connection, and let them know that you are here for them.
  o Allows youth to open up with you.
  o Helps give some insight of how to interact with, talk to, and engage them.
  o Can help you better understand their behaviours.

• Set rules and boundaries from Week 1. Be fair but firm in these boundaries, as well as consistent.
  o Youth may come from backgrounds where there are little-to-no boundaries or rules, or consistency in them.
  o Keep a positive relationship between you and the youth.
  o Try not to be the “teacher” or “mom”, or use the “because I said so” approach.
  o Be calm and non-reactive when addressing behaviours, and if they continue or get out of hand, ask the facilitator or program coordinator to assist.

• Help youth cope and/or understand their feelings and actions.
  o Offer assistance in trying to help youth understand their feelings.
  o Give suggestions for how they can cope in a healthier, more positive way.
  o It may be helpful to explain to youth why a behaviour is inappropriate or unacceptable at that time.
• Be proactive in diffusing or stopping a situation from escalating.
  o If you notice that a situation or activity is getting out of hand or escalating, try to stop it before it gets worse.
  o Try stopping the activity all together and waiting for the facilitator to continue or assist.
  o Try changing the topic or turning the youth’s attention elsewhere.
  o Building rapport with the youth will help you to gage what is right during that time.
  o Try to focus on your table’s behaviour(s) and being proactive in managing them and not trying to manage the entire group’s behaviour.

• Have open communication with youth.
  o Be honest in your reasons for a behaviour being unacceptable and having open dialogue with the youth.
  o Help them to better understand why the behaviour is unacceptable.
  o Open conversations can be positive and productive, can allow youth to ask questions, and can help them realize that you respect them enough to have such conversations.
  o Open communication and honesty also ties in with building rapport and maintaining a working relationship.

• Don’t call the youth out in front of the group.
  o This may result in more negative effects than positive.
  o It may result in a power struggle, complete disengagement, or retaliation.
  o Try taking the youth aside, or out of the room, to talk with them about their actions or quietly correct the behaviour at the table.
  o Depending on the behaviour, simply remove the object and replace it with something else.
  o Depending on the youth and your rapport with them, a “look” may also work.
• Encourage self-management.
  o Encourage the youth to take responsibility for their actions.
  o Ask them to apologize if they have said something inappropriate or hurtful or explain why their actions may not be the best choice.
  o Self-management allows for youth to correct their own behaviours.

• Be fair, simple, and consistent in your boundaries and expectations.
  o Youth will quickly learn and remember what your expectations are for group.
  o This will also allow for all youth to be treated equally.

• If you are unable to manage a behaviour or situation yourself, ask for help!
  o Part of the facilitator’s role is to help manage the behaviours of the group.
  o Asking them for help will take some of the pressures off of you, and will help you maintain a positive working relationship with the youth.

• DO:
  o Be positive.
  o Respect the beliefs and feelings of others, even if you don’t agree.
  o Be understanding of others and their situations.

• DON’T:
  o Use a hands-off approach. Don’t touch the youth in any way.
  o Don’t dictate to the youth what it is you think they need.
  o Don’t be judgmental.
  o Don’t counsel the youth.
  o Don’t single out or spend more time with one youth than others.
  o Don’t fail to set a positive example.
  o Don’t rush to get through material.
  o Don’t grade the youth.
  o Don’t keep secrets for the youth.
  o Don’t degrade others.
DEALING WITH RESISTANCE

Common forms of resistance:
- Arguing, interrupting, denying, ignoring

When faced with resistance, consider the following:
- Each individual’s background.
- If they are dealing with something outside of group.
- Their understanding of what is being asked of them.
- Each youth’s needs and personality as an individual.
- Do they like attention from other people? Are they trying to be funny?
- One’s fear of sharing or participating.
- Do they have low self-esteem and don’t feel that their thoughts are valued?
- Do they feel comfortable speaking in front of others?

Strategies for dealing with resistance:
- Acknowledge the youth’s disagreement or refusal. Let them know that they have been heard and that you understand what they have said. Take this opportunity to ask questions and learn where the resistance is coming from.
- Be non-confrontational during this time and simply use the time to further understand. Try not to challenge a youth on what they think or believe and listen to what they have to say. Take the time to calmly explain the task, expectation, etc.
- State both sides to the disagreement, your request and their resistance, to help clarify both sides. Paraphrase what has been said to let them know you are listening. You could use the model of, “One the one hand…and on the other hand…”
- Provide the youth with choices. This allows them to feel some sense of control in the situation, helping to reduce their resistance, while still trying to keep a focus on your original request. Don’t set a strict agenda for what you want them to do, and recognize that you cannot change someone on your terms.
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict can arise for several different reasons. Miscommunication or misunderstandings between two people, differences in personalities, personal goals, values, and views can all cause conflict.

In group programs, we aim to use the Collaborating/Problem Solving strategy:

• Both parties know what they need and want, and are cooperative with one another
• Both parties have equal power
• Goals of both parties are equally important
• Both parties wish to learn something from the situation
• Allows for discussion, learning, and working through the conflict in order to maintain a positive working relationship
• Both parties are often happy with the outcome
• Both parties’ goals, needs, and wants are met, and a mutually agreed-upon solution is achieved

If collaborating/problem solving does not work you could also try:

• Compromising/Accommodating
  o A temporary solution is achieved
  o Each party must give up something to achieve a solution
• Avoiding
  o Useful when one or both parties need a break from the situation
  o Allows for more information to be gathered
  o Can also be used if a third party can better make a decision

Try not to be competing or forceful against a youth unless someone’s safety is in question or if the decision that is to be made is for the greater benefit of the whole group.
ROLE-PLAYS AND SCENERIOS

It is Week 5 of Rebound, and Johnny, who normally sits at your table, seems a bit off. His eyes are red, he appears distant, is not willing to participate, and is unusually quiet. What do you do?

You notice that a youth at your table often makes negative comments towards themselves or others. They begin making statements about how life sucks, they are never happy, no one likes them, and they see no point to anything. What do you do?

Johnny and Billy, who both sit at your table, have become louder when speaking to each, begin telling inappropriate jokes, and have started to throw Play-Doh at one another. What do you do?

You and another volunteer have not been seeing eye-to-eye for the last two sessions. You notice some tension between the two of you, and are beginning to feel uncomfortable with your interactions. What do you do?

A youth at another table discloses to you some personal information that causes you to become concerned for their health and wellbeing. This is the first time you have heard this information, or anything similar. What do you do?

You are doing an activity with just your table. A youth is refusing to participate and has been refusing all night. They will only answer your questions with a “yes” or “no”. You have been trying all night to talk to them, and have had no luck. What do you do?

It is the first week of Rebound. Youth have started to come into the room. You are nervous and find the situation a little awkward. Youth begin to sit at your table. What do you do?

Johnny has started tapping his pen rather loudly while the lead coach is giving the group important information. It is becoming harder to pay attention to the lead coach, and you notice other youth starting to look for the noise. What do you do?

You have 5 youth at your table. Four of the youth are usually engaged, participate well, and have been easy to build rapport with. One youth is always quiet, has not engaged or participated much, and has not had many conversations with you. What do you do?
TIPS AND STRATEGIES FOR BEING A VOLUNTEER

• Introduce yourself to youth on a first name basis
• Dress casually and comfortably
• Have an open mind and positive attitude
• Focus on the strengths and assets of the youth
• Accept all youth for who they are, not what they have done
• Respect the views, opinions and beliefs of all others in the group, even if they are different than your own
• Be encouraging, empathetic, and understanding
• Report challenging behaviours to the facilitator/program coordinator
• Know your duty to report, and know that the facilitator/program coordinator can provide support for this if needed
• Talk to the facilitator/program coordinator about any concerns about the group, including youth, other volunteers, disagreements, etc.
• Talk to the other volunteers about things that are troubling you at group. Use each other as a support team. Address what is troubling you right away; taking it home can make the situation worse.
• Don’t counsel youth
• Don’t set an agenda for youth; you cannot change someone on your terms.
• Recognize that those who want to change will do so on their own time and terms. Simply provide support and encouragement to youth.
• Be a positive example for youth
• Don’t keep secrets for youth
• Don’t share information about a youth with anyone outside of the group
• Don’t contact youth outside of the group setting
• When sharing information with other members of the group (i.e. volunteers/coordinator) only disclose information about a youth you feel is necessary to share
RESOURCES


RNJ Youth Services Volunteer Handbook. *RNJ Youth Services*