

SBIL 172

SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 5/6/91

FURTHER:

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: _____

The Finance Committee considered SENATE BILL NO. 172

"An Act relating to a peer counselor program."

Died in SFC

and recommended:

- replace with _____ CS _____
- or adopt _____ CS _____
- attached amendment(s)
- _____ letter of intent adopted
- same title
- new title
- technical title change (HB only)

do pass

do not pass

no recommendation

individual recommendations

further referral to _____

This bill was incorporated within CS SB 170 (Fin)

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S) Dept/Date:

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____

appropriation-no fiscal note

APPROVES PREVIOUS: Dept/Date:

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____

SIGNING DO PASS:

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. _____ 2. _____
Co-Chairs: Signatures and Recommendations

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

FIRST COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE

DATE: 3/6/91

FURTHER: Finance

Date of 5-Day Notice: 04/11/91
(in accordance with Uniform Rule 23)

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: 5-6-91

HESS Committee considered SB 172

Peer counselor program.

and a majority of the committee recommends it be replaced with

and recommended:

- replace with _____ CS SB 172 (HESS) same title
- attached amendment(s) and do pass new title
- _____ letter of intent adopted

do pass

do not pass

no recommendation

individual recommendations

further referral to _____

FN

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):

- fiscal note(s) Dept/Date HSS 4/11 & 4/25 zero fiscal note(s) Dept/Date _____
SB & CS

appropriation-no fiscal note

Governor's bill w/fiscal note

SIGNING DO PASS:

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

Jan Cost Cost

[Signature] Min

Paul Frick No Per

Arlis Sturgulinski Do Pass
Chair: Signature and Recommendation

REQUEST: FISCAL NOTE

Revision Date: _____ Agency Affect: Health & Social Services
 Title: Peer counselor program BRU: State Health Services
 Sponsor: Pearce, Uehling, Zharoff Components: Maternal, Child & Family Health
 Requester: Senate HES

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
Personal Services		93.8	93.8	93.8	93.8	93.8
Travel		9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0
Contractual		57.7	57.7	57.7	57.7	57.7
Supplies		1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Equipment		7.5				
Land & Structures						
Grants, Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	169.5	162.0	162.0	162.0	162.0

CAPITAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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REVENUE	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

General Funds	0.0	169.5	162.0	162.0	162.0	162.0
Federal Funds						
Other						
TOTAL	0.0	169.5	162.0	162.0	162.0	162.0

POSITIONS

Full-Time		2	2	2	2	2
Part-Time		0				
Temporary		0				

ANALYSIS: (attach a separate page if necessary)

For FY 92 - Line 100 will require 1 Health Program Specialist II, range 19 and 1 Clerk-Typist III, range 8. Travel includes workshops and school district technical assistance. Contractual will be for space, communication systems, professional contract assistance. Line 400 is for the printing and procurement of educational materials. Equipment needed will be for PC's for each of the positions, plus a portable laptop.

Prepared By:
Division:

Peter M. Nakamura MD
 Peter M. Nakamura, MD, MPH, Director
PUBLIC HEALTH

Phone: 465-3090
 Date: 04/11/91

Approved By Commissioner:
 Agency:

Theodore Mala, M.D., MPH
HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Date: _____

Distribution (by preparer):

Legislative Finance, Legislative Sponsor, Requestor,
 Office of Management & Budget, Impacted Agency(ies)

REQUEST: FISCAL NOTE

Revision Date: 4/25/91 Agency Affected: Health & Social Services
 Title: Peer counselor program BRU: State Health Services
 Sponsor: Pearce, Uehling, Zharoff Components: Maternal, Child & Family Health
 Requester: Senate HES

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
Personal Services		93.8	93.8	93.8	93.8	93.8
Travel		9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0
Contractual		55	55.0	55.0	55.0	55.0
Supplies		1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Equipment		7.5				
Land & Structures						
Grants, Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	166.8	159.3	159.3	159.3	159.3
CAPITAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
REVENUE	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)

General Funds	0.0	166.8	159.3	159.3	159.3	159.3
Federal Funds						
Other						
TOTAL	0.0	166.8	159.3	159.3	159.3	159.3

POSITIONS

Full-Time		2	2	2	2	2
Part-Time		0				
Temporary		0				

ANALYSIS: (attach a separate page if necessary)

Please see attached analysis

Prepared By: Peter M. Nakamura, MD, MPH, Director *P. M. Nakamura*
 Division: PUBLIC HEALTH

Phone: 465-3090
 Date: 04/25/91

Approved By Commissioner: Theodore Mala, M.D., MPH *T. Mala*
 Agency: HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Date: 04/25/91

Distribution (by preparer):
 Legislative Finance, Legislative Sponsor, Requestor,
 Office of Management & Budget, Impacted Agency(ies)

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS FOR SB 172

FY 92

Personal Services: \$93.8

Permanent full time Health Program Specialist (Rg.19) and Clerk Typist III (Rg.8) for service coordination with the School Districts, Department of Education, Alaska Area Native Health Services, Regional Health Corporations, Municipalities, community agencies and the Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities peer counseling project staff. (In addition, grant management of the projects funded by SB 170).

Travel: \$9.0

Travel for the Health Program Specialist II to provide on site service training for community base agencies, program development and services coordination between the involved agencies.

Contractual: \$55.0

Staff operating cost associated with communications, space rental, and printing of education material. (approximately \$15.0)

Professional contract services for peer councilor program to include specialized peer training services, councilor supervision. (approximately \$40.0)

Supplies: \$1.5

Office and computer supplies for the professional and clerical staff.

Equipment: \$7.5

Computers, printer and office furniture for the professional and clerical staff.

FY 93 FY 96

Personal Services: \$93.8

Permanent full time Health Program Specialist (Rg.19) and Clerk Typist III (Rg.8) to service coordination with the School Districts, Department of Education, Alaska Area Native Health Services, Regional Health Corporations, Municipalities, community agencies and the Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities peer counseling project staff. (In addition grant management of the projects funded by SB 170).

Travel: \$9.0

2 of 3

Travel for the Health Program Specialist II to provide on site service training for community base agencies, program development and services coordination between the involved agencies.

Contractual: \$55.0

Staff operating cost associated with communications, space rental, and printing of education material. (approximately \$15.0)

Professional contract services for peer councilor program to include specialized peer training services, councilor supervision. (approximately \$40.0)

Supplies: \$1.5

Office and computer supplies for the professional and clerical staff.

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 172 (HES)

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY THE SENATE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Offered: 5/6/91
Referred: Finance

Sponsor(s): SENATORS PEARCE, Uehling, Zharoff

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 **"An Act relating to a peer counselor program."**

2 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

3 *** Section 1.** AS 47 is amended by adding a new chapter to read:

4 **CHAPTER 18. ADOLESCENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.**

5 **Sec. 47.18.010. PEER COUNSELOR PROGRAM.** (a) The department shall develop
6 and implement a continuing statewide program of technical support and assistance to encourage
7 school districts and municipalities that initiate implementation, or that are considering
8 implementation, of adolescent peer counseling groups for

9 (1) prevention of adolescent behavioral patterns that jeopardize physical and
10 mental health and that hamper social, educational, and personal development; and

11 (2) spreading information about services that are available to adolescents to help
12 them with their health needs.

13 (b) The program of technical support required under (a) of this section must include

14 (1) suggested methods for maintaining a high level of adolescent, parental, and

1 community support for peer counseling groups;

2 (2) workshops, seminars, or other training opportunities for adolescent peer
3 counselors and their adult leaders; this training must include sessions to

4 (A) develop interpersonal communications skills;

5 (B) teach healthy life skills, responsible decision making, the value of
6 abstinence from adolescent premarital intercourse, and accurate health information,
7 emphasizing sexual development; and

8 (C) provide information about services that are available in the peer
9 counselors' areas and how those services can be obtained for pregnancy prevention, and
10 prenatal care;

11 (3) assistance in selecting appropriate resource materials for the groups;

12 (4) recommended mechanisms for effectively monitoring and evaluating the
13 activities and accomplishments of the groups; and

14 (5) other similar services to assist and encourage school districts and
15 municipalities in establishing and administering adolescent peer counseling groups.

16 (c) In developing the program of technical support and assistance required under (a) of
17 this section, the department shall review and consider the activities and accomplishments in other
18 states that have developed peer counseling networks. The department shall solicit contributions
19 of money and expertise from the private sector that may be available for this type of program.

SENATE BILL NO. 172

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

SEVENTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY SENATORS PEARCE, Uehling, Zharoff

Introduced: 3/6/91
Referred: HES and Finance

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to a peer counselor program."

2 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

3 * Section 1. AS 47 is amended by adding a new chapter to read:

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5 Sec. 47.18.010. PEER COUNSELOR PROGRAM. (a) The department shall develop
6 and implement a continuing statewide program of technical support and assistance to encourage
7 school districts and municipalities that initiate implementation, or that are considering
8 implementation, of adolescent peer counseling groups for

9 (1) prevention of adolescent behavioral patterns that jeopardize physical and
10 mental health and that hamper social, educational, and personal development; and

11 (2) spreading information about services that are available to adolescents to help
12 them with their health needs.

13 (b) The program of technical support required under (a) of this section must include

14 (1) suggested methods for maintaining a high level of adolescent, parental, and

1 community support for peer counseling groups;

2 (2) workshops, seminars, or other training opportunities for adolescent peer
3 counselors and their adult leaders; this training must include sessions to

4 (A) develop interpersonal communications skills;

5 (B) teach accurate health information, emphasizing sexual development;

6 and

7 (C) provide information about services that are available in the peer
8 counselors' areas and how those services can be obtained for pregnancy prevention,
9 prenatal care, and healthy life skills;

10 (3) assistance in selecting appropriate resource materials for the groups;

11 (4) recommended mechanisms for effectively monitoring and evaluating the
12 activities and accomplishments of the groups; and

13 (5) other similar services to assist and encourage school districts and
14 municipalities in establishing and administering adolescent peer counseling groups.

15 (c) In developing the program of technical support and assistance required under (a) of
16 this section, the department shall review and consider the activities and accomplishments in other
17 states that have developed peer counseling networks and shall avail itself of the resources of the
18 National Association of Teen Institutes, Saint Louis, Missouri. The department shall solicit
19 contributions of money and expertise from the private sector that may be available for this type
20 of program.

21 (d) A primary policy and objective of the program of technical support and assistance
22 required under (a) of this section shall be to encourage adolescents to abstain from premarital
23 sexual intimacy.

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
SENATE BILL NO. 172

HISTORY IN THE SENATE

1991
3/6
5/6

Read first time and referred to:
Hess, Finance

MS RPT() CS 3 DP 1 NR ___ DNP ___ AM
New Title ___ Same Title ___ Previous FN ___
 FN ___ OFN ___ To Finance

___ RPT(___) CS ___ DP ___ NR ___ DNP ___ AM
New Title ___ Same Title ___ Previous FN ___
___ FN ___ OFN ___ To ___

___ RPT(___) CS ___ DP ___ NR ___ DNP ___ AM
New Title ___ Same Title ___ Previous FN ___
___ FN ___ OFN ___ To ___

___ Rules Calendar(___) CS ___ AM ___ Other ___
New Title ___ Same Title ___ Previous FN ___
___ FN ___ OFN ___

Read second time
___ CS Adopted (___) ___ New Title ___
___ Amended ___ Advanced ___

Read third time
___ Letter of Intent adopted ___
___ Return to second for specific amendment ___

PASSED	EFD Same ___ or
Yeas	Yeas
Nays	Nays
Excused	Excused
Absent	Absent

Reconsideration
Reconsideration not taken up

PASSED	EFD Same ___ or
Yeas	Yeas
Nays	Nays
Excused	Excused
Absent	Absent

Reported correctly engrossed
Signed by President, to House

Secretary of the Senate

HISTORY IN THE HOUSE

19

Read first time and referred to:

___ RPT ___ CS(___) ___ New Title ___
___ DP ___ DNP ___ NR ___ AM ___
___ FN ___ OFN ___ Previous FN ___

___ RPT ___ CS(___) ___ New Title ___
___ DP ___ DNP ___ NR ___ AM ___
___ FN ___ OFN ___ Previous FN ___

___ RPT ___ CS(___) ___ New Title ___
___ DP ___ DNP ___ NR ___ AM ___
___ FN ___ OFN ___ Previous FN ___

Read second time
CS(___) Adopted

Amended

Advanced

Read third time

Return to second for specific amendment

PASSED	EFD Same ___ or
Yeas	Yeas
Nays	Nays
Excused	Excused
Absent	Absent

___ Intent adopted

Reconsideration
Reconsideration not taken up

PASSED ON RECON.	EFD Same ___ or
Yeas	Yeas
Nays	Nays
Excused	Excused
Absent	Absent

___ Intent adopted

Reported correctly engrossed, signed by the Speaker
and returned to the Senate

Chief Clerk of the House

SENATE-HOUSE HISTORY Continued

19

Received from the House

Version: _____

Concur in House amendment

Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

_____ Efd same or Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

Failed to concur in House amendment, ask House recede

Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

House failed to / receded from amendment

Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

CC appointed by Senate _____ Chair

CC appointed by House _____ Chair

(S) Granted Limited Powers of Free Conference

(H) Granted Limited Powers of Free Conference

19

(S) Adopted CC Rpt _____

Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

_____ Efd same or Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

(H) Adopted CC Rpt _____

Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

_____ Efd same or Y ___ N ___ E ___ A ___

To enrolling

Received from enrolling

Sent to Governor

_____ By Governor

Chapter Number _____

Filed with Lieutenant Governor

A M E N D M E N T

OFFERED IN THE SENATE
TO: CSSB 172 (HES)

BY SENATOR PEARCE

Page 1, line 7:

Delete "and"

Insert ","

Following "municipalities"

Insert ", and nonprofit corporations incorporated under AS 10.20"

Page 1, line 8, following "groups"

Insert "under adult supervision"

A M E N D M E N T

OFFERED IN THE SENATE
TO: CSSB 172 (HES)

BY SENATOR PEARCE

Page 2, lines 5 - 7:

Delete all material.

Insert "(B) teach accurate health information, emphasizing sexual development;"

Page 2, line 10, following ";"

Insert "and

(D) encourage adolescents to avoid major risk-taking behavior and to
reinforce responsible behavior and self control;"

Alaska State Legislature

3111 C Street, Suite 150
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907) 561-2038



During Session:
P.O. Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-4993

Senator Drue Pearce
District G
MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Pat Pourchot, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Senator Drue Pearce *Drue Pearce*

DATE: May 13, 1991

RE: Sponsor Statement on CSSB 172 (HESS)

The fundamental purpose of this legislation is to provide a support network for adolescents that furnishes information, support, and resources in a non-threatening manner. Although this legislation is a result of a task force that focussed on the problem of teen pregnancy, it is abundantly clear that the problems associated with teen pregnancy are also associated with substance abuse, poor life skills, and many of the other crises that adolescents in our society face. At the root of the problems plaguing our youth is low self-esteem and the need to feel accepted. A coordinated peer counseling program will help solve these problems.

The Department of Health and Social Services would initiate and implement adolescent peer counseling groups by providing thorough technical assistance. The position this bill creates would be responsible for encouraging support within the community, as well as providing training opportunities. Through workshops, seminars, and any other appropriate means, adult leaders would train the young counselors in the areas of interpersonal communication skills, accurate health information (with an emphasis on sexual development). The position would also include informing the peer programs about the attainability of services for pregnancy prevention, prenatal care and all other healthy life skills available in the area.

The bill encourages using the resources of national organizations and the models of other successful peer counseling programs.

Since a teenagers first inclination is to ask for the advice of friends, it is important to make sure that the answers are educated and accurate. This legislation would provide consistent and reliable support, which could be the only hope for a teen who has no where else to turn.

Alaska State Legislature

3111 C Street, Suite 150
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907) 561-2038



During Session:
P.O. Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-4993

Senator Drue Pearce
District G

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: An Act Relating to a Peer Counselor Program
(CSSB 172, HESS)

TO: Senator Pat Pourchot, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee

FROM: Senator Drue Pearce *Drue Pearce*

DATE: May 13, 1991

The following is a sectional analysis of CSSB 172 (HESS):

Section 1. Adds Section 47.18.010 which requires the Department of Health and Social Services to provide support to encourage school district, municipalities, or nonprofit corporations to implement peer counseling groups. These groups are to provide support to adolescents in the hope of preventing behavior that is mentally or physically hampering and to spread information about services available to help adolescents. All of these groups are to be supervised by an adult leader.

(b) of this section specifies the technical support the department is required to provide. This includes designing methods to develop and maintain support from adolescents, parents, and the community.

This section requires, as a responsibility of the new position, that support be encouraged within the community, and training opportunities are provided. Through workshops, seminars, and any other appropriate means, adult leaders would train the young counselors in the areas of interpersonal communication skills and accurate health information (with an emphasis on sexual development). The position would also include informing the peer programs about the attainability of services for pregnancy prevention, prenatal care and all other teen programs.

(c) of this section requires the department to review and consider the accomplishments other states have had with similar programs. This section also allows the department to solicit contributions of money and/or expertise from the private sector.

Alaska State Legislature

3111 C Street, Suite 150
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907) 561-2038



During Session:
P.O. Box V
Juneau, Alaska 99811
(907) 465-4993

Senator Drue Pearce
District G

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: An Act Relating to a Peer Counselor Program
(SB 172)

TO: Senator Arliss Sturgulewski, Chair
Health Education & Social Services Committee

FROM: Senator Drue Pearce *Drue Pearce*

DATE: April 12 , 1991

The following is a sectional analysis of SB 172:

Section 1. Adds Section 47.18.010 which requires the Department of Health and Social Services to provide support to encourage school district and municipalities to implement peer counseling groups. These groups are to provide support to adolescents in the hope of preventing behavior that is mentally or physically hampering and to spread information about services available to help adolescents.

(b) Of this section specifies the technical support the department is required to provide. This includes designing methods to develop and maintain support from adolescents, parents, and the community.

This section would ensure the training of peer counselors by requiring training in communication skills, accurate health information, and information about the services available in the area to prevent pregnancy, provide prenatal care, and healthy life skills.

This section requires the department to provide assistance to help select appropriate resource materials. The department must develop a monitoring and evaluating method to measure the success of the peer counseling and try to encourage school districts to implement programs.

(c) Of this section requires the department to review and consider the accomplishments other states have had with similar programs. The National Association of Teen Institutes in St. Louis Missouri is a suggested resource. This section also allows the department to solicit contributions of money and/or expertise from the private sector.

(d) explains the objective of the entire program is to encourage abstaining from sexual intimacy.

Senate Bill No.172

For an Act entitled: "An Act Relating to a Peer Counselor Program".

Summary

SB 172 directs the Department to develop and implement an on-going program of technical assistance and support to help municipalities and school districts statewide implement adolescent peer counseling groups with the objective to be encouraging adolescents to abstain from premarital sexual intimacy.

Discussion

Peer counseling programs have been found to be effective in reaching teens who are reluctant to approach adults. Since adolescents are heavily influenced by their peers, knowledgeable adolescents can provide an important service to their peers and their community by serving as peer counselors.

The training and education of the adolescents selected to be peer counselors can benefit those individual adolescents greatly. The increased knowledge and self-esteem related to the education and attention received can significantly affect their own choices related to their sexual behavior.

Peer counseling programs have been implemented in the state, in some localities, for the purposes of suicide prevention and other adolescent health issues. It would be important for Department of Education, Department of Regional and Community Affairs and Department of Health and Social Services staff to come together before designing this program to determine if existing peer counseling programs should be expanded to include the reproductive health education being promoted by this effort. Since there is significant cost involved in training adolescents in how to reach their fellow adolescents, how to counsel appropriately etc. it would seem appropriate to utilize them for more than one purpose. Additionally, teens at risk for early sexual activity tend to be the same teens at risk for other unhealthy behaviors. A peer counselor who has earned the trust of these individuals is more likely to be able to reach them on a variety of issues versus a number of peer counselors each trained to deal with a specific problem.

Since the one common access point for reaching adolescents is the local school, it is imperative that the local school districts be involved in the development of this peer counseling program. The adolescent who has already left school is usually a high risk teen in many areas. They are especially at risk for developing high risk sexual behavior patterns, ie. early sexual intimacy, frequent

partners and unprotected sex. Peer counseling programs for these adolescents will need to be very individualized to utilize the programs within specific communities that provide these adolescents with other services.

It is imperative that the specific adults in the community that are trusted by the teens be involved in the peer counseling program and be trained to provide support and technical assistance to the teens, on an on-going basis. It is also important that a variety of adolescents be selected in each community to ensure access to the various subgroups within the community. A really effective program will promote overall adolescent wellness and good reproductive health. It will not focus on pregnancy prevention. Research indicates that when adolescents have good self-esteem, when they have hope for the future and when they believe they have the right to control their own bodies, they are much less likely to become sexually active at an early age.

Position

The Department supports this bill in concept, as it is consistent with the objectives of the Department. However, prior to development of such a program it would seem imperative that a survey of local school districts, municipalities and other entities, who might direct a peer counseling program at the local level, be completed to determine the perceived need, willingness to participate and resources available at the local level for implementation and local support. Coordination with existing peer counseling programs is essential, as is the evaluation of these efforts to determine what works and what are the problems to be anticipated. It is critical that the Department of Education be involved in the program's development and implementation and that a commitment of DOE staff time be a prerequisite to beginning the program.

Peter M. Nakamura H.D.
Peter M. Nakamura, MD, MPH
Director
Division of Public Health

4/11/91
Date

Theodore A. Mala, MD, MPH
Commissioner
Department of Health and Social Services

Date

Dear Alaska State Leader,

"I JUST WANT TO DIE"

"I'M PREGNANT"

"I DON'T HAVE ANYONE ELSE TO TALK TO"

"PLEASE HELP ME"

These are quotes from real people, real youth, in Alaska, this month, really.

When students have problems they often go to talk to their friends first! A peer needs to know how to listen, who their resources are, and what to do in helping out a friend. This is what Natural Helpers, a peer counseling program, is all about.

I was a Natural Helper in high school and I know that from my involvement alone I have had countless interventions and preventions. Peer helping programs are important to inspire the students and provide them with the capabilities and concepts necessary to (not only) contribute to their community, but lead their peers (and adults alike) to a safe and healthy tomorrow. I wish everyone could be a Natural Helper!

Natural Helpers has positively changed my life. When I entered my first training I was not drug free and I looked favorably to many unhealthy lifestyles and role models. Today instead of thinking of suicide or drinking I think of future adventures, goals and aspirations. Thanks to Natural Helpers. Not only has it changed my life but that of my friends and the people I talk with along the way. In Natural Helpers I have learned how to get my friends help. Natural Helpers did not turn me into a professional counselor or mini psychologist. Natural Helpers gave me the knowledge to become a better informed friend with improved listening and coping skills. Also Natural Helpers taught me about me. Many dynamics come from the Natural Helper program and from being a Natural Helper.

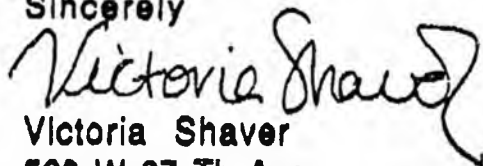
To overcome the drug problems and issues (for example; teen suicide, teen pregnancy, low self esteem, family problems, etc.) that concern young people in this state today we, as students, must be empowered to become part of the solution. The Peer counseling programs do empower us to bring about a positive change!

I am a student who sees this program working. So often I hear "you are the future leaders of tomorrow", but we can and do lead today, we just need training from professional Natural Helper trainers at the Alaska Council on Prevention on Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Please support Peer helper programs and youth programs. There are many very good youth programs, for example: A STAND, Teen Trainers, Governor Student Health and Safety Conferences, Debate, Alaska Teen Institute, Anchorage Youth Court and Student Leadership Organizations (for example: student government and DECA), of which I have been involved in high school. I know these programs work because I was part of them. They are all important!!! Peer helping programs are different because they really teach you how to communicate and help a friend who needs you.

It is so totally necessary to keep the Natural Helpers program and expanding the program by passing the HB 255 would be a most excellent move.

As My friend Andy once said, "As individuals we can make choices, but if we stand together we can make a change." Thank you for helping us make a change and thank you for your time.

Sincerely



Victoria Shaver
520 W 87 Th Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99515
(907) 522-3215