

PEER HEALTH EXCHANGE

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To learn more about our health education work across the country, visit us on the web at peerhealthexchange.org

Peer Health Exchange's mission is to give teenagers the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy decisions. We do this by training college students to teach a health curriculum in low-income high schools that lack comprehensive health education. Initial results show that PHE high school students increase their health knowledge and use what they learn to make healthy decisions.

History

In 1999, six Yale undergraduates began teaching health workshops in New Haven public schools in order to fill the gap left by an underfunded, understaffed district health program. In 2003, the founding members of that group established Peer Health Exchange to replicate this successful program in other communities with unmet health education needs. Since then, we have trained more than 7,500 college student volunteers to deliver effective health education to close to 96,000 public high school students in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Washington, D.C.

Why it Matters

We believe all young people deserve equal access to the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to make healthy decisions. Studies have shown that teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and untreated mental illness are associated with poor academic achievement, high school dropout, and other diminished life opportunities. While all teenagers make choices that could put their health at risk, teenagers in low-income communities are less likely to have access to quality health education and more likely to experience negative consequences associated with risky choices. The CDC reports that:

SEXUAL HEALTH

1 in 3 teens is sexually-active, and of those teens, **40%** did not use a condom the last time they had sex.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

1 in 4 teens uses marijuana.
1 in 5 teens binge drinks.

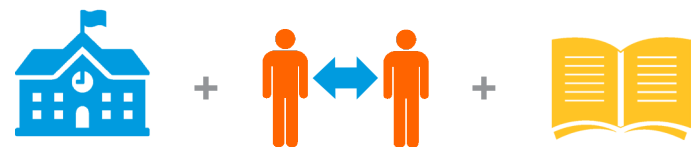
MENTAL HEALTH

1 in 6 teens has seriously considered suicide.
1 in 10 teens has experienced dating violence.

Peer Health Exchange in New York City

Peer Health Exchange launched its first program site in New York City in 2004. Peer Health Exchange is now reaching over 5,000 teens in 50 public schools across Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, and the Bronx. Peer Health Exchange is currently training 500 college volunteers from Columbia University, Barnard College, Fordham University, City College, Hunter College, NYU, and Brooklyn College.

Our Approach



SCHOOL PARTNERS

PHE works in low-income, urban high schools that share our belief that health is a critical part of a young person's education. These schools partner with PHE to supplement or provide their health education program.

PEER MODEL

PHE recruits, selects, and trains college student volunteers to teach PHE's curriculum in high school classrooms. As slightly older peers, PHE volunteers are well-positioned to lead honest conversations about teens' choices and health.

HEALTH CURRICULUM

PHE volunteers teach a thirteen-workshop curriculum through which teenagers learn essential health information and develop critical skills including decision-making, communication, advocacy, and accessing health resources in their schools and communities.

Over the course of our program, PHE empowers young people to make active, informed choices that contribute to better health and life outcomes.

Curriculum

The PHE curriculum is designed to give teenagers the knowledge and skills they need to make healthy decisions. PHE staff developed these workshops with the support of a team of curriculum advisors ranging from adolescent health experts to high school teachers. The curriculum also aligns with national health and education standards. PHE's curriculum is culturally-relevant, age-appropriate, and medically-accurate.

CONTENT AREAS

Sexual Health

Substances

Mental Health

SKILL-BASED WORKSHOP UNITS

Reflection Unit

1. *Peer Health Exchange: Your Health & You*
2. *Under Pressure: Alcohol & Marijuana*
3. *Under Pressure: Sex*
4. *Lights, Camera, Reflection!*

Communication & Advocacy Unit

1. *Speak Up & Listen Up*
2. *Let's Talk About Sex*
3. *Breaking the Silence: Speaking up for Others*
4. *Advocating for Health*

Accessing Resources Unit

1. *Internet Resources: Seeking the Truth*
2. *Health Clinics: Where to Go & Who to See*

Decision-Making Unit

1. *It's Your Choice*
2. *Making Choices: Sex*
3. *Making Choices: Alcohol & Marijuana*

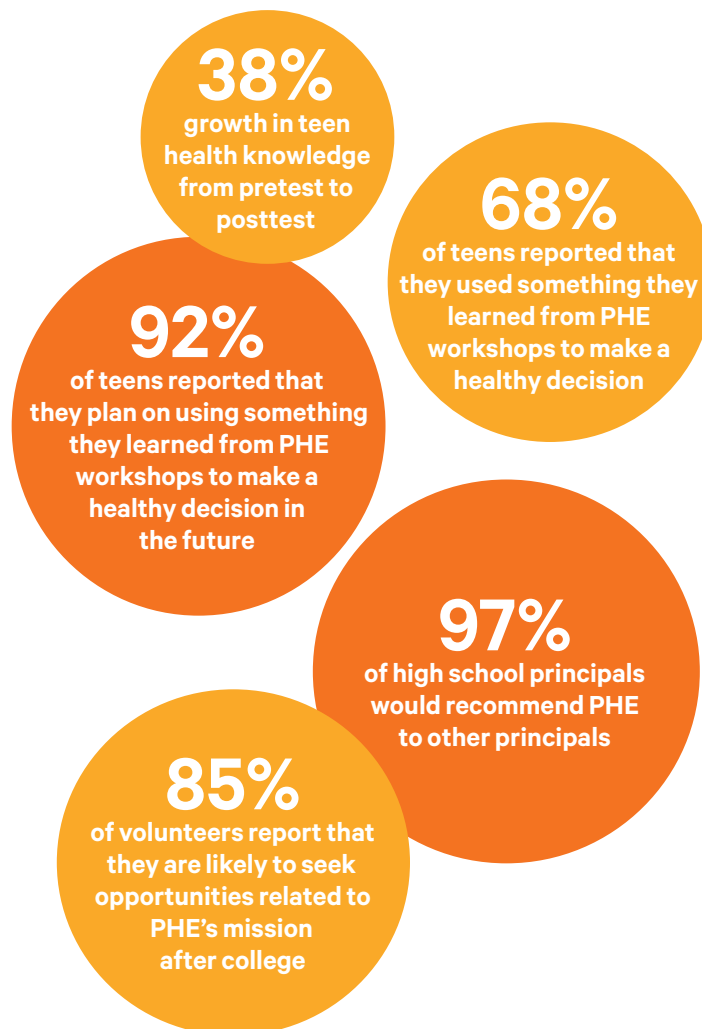
Over the course of the curriculum, students:

- Reflect on their personal health and the health of their communities
- Learn basic, accurate information about sexual health, mental health and substance use
- Learn to communicate effectively with family members and peers
- Advocate for the improvement of personal, family, and community health
- Learn how to use the health resources in their neighborhoods and schools
- Practice using a thoughtful decision-making model

Impact and Evaluation

PHE administers a test to PHE high school students before and after the program to measure growth in functional health knowledge and critical skills. PHE also utilizes questionnaires and surveys to evaluate the impact on high school students and the experiences of our college student volunteers, teachers, and principals.

In 2012-2013, we achieved the following impact:



In 2013, PHE partnered with a third-party evaluator to learn more about the impact of our program on teen health behavior. The resulting study will compare data collected from students who are receiving PHE with a comparison group of students who are not receiving PHE, and is slated for completion in 2016. We believe that when teens demonstrate growth in functional health knowledge and critical skills we will see lower rates of unintended teen pregnancy, lower rates of teen substance abuse, and higher rates of teens seeking mental health support—behavior trends associated with greater life opportunities.