



## Healthy Relationships for Youth Program

### Resource Guide for Doing Social Action in School

*A guide to support youth in turning their ideas  
for a better world into actions!*

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## Purpose

The intention of the Healthy Relationship for Youth (HRY) Program Resource Guide is to capture the various school-based social action works of the youth facilitators who participate in the Healthy Relationships for Youth Program of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association. Youth engagement is a valued part of social change in our communities and the HRY Program Resource Guide seeks to value and highlight the work youth have done and inspire other youth to take action for issues of concern to them.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to:

- Province of Nova Scotia's Child and Youth Strategy, Youth Engagement Grant
- The youth engaged as HRY youth facilitators
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# Plan to Action!

## → **Brainstorm Your Ideas with Your Group**

To figure out what topics are important to you and your group members, you need to take the time to decide what one area you would like to raise awareness around. Some possible ways of doing this are by creating flow charts, discussing with a partner what topics are important to you. You might even find something by watching the news to see what is going on in your neck of the woods! (Please see page 15, *Let's Give em Something to Talk About*)

## → **Focus on One Area**

When you pick a topic to raise awareness around, make sure to stick to that topic. It may be easy to get caught up in similar issues, but be careful not to spread your campaign too far! You want to focus your effort in one area to really get your message across.

## → **Decide What Type of Project You Will Do**

There are many types of projects you can do, in this resource guide you will find lots of options and be able to see what other groups have done. Make sure if you choose an involved project to implement time management strategies to implement your goal. Don't forget that campaigns take funds, so make sure yours are spent affectively. Also, it is important to keep in mind what you can effectively do with the time you are given. Don't take on too much! (See page 15, *Let's Give em Something to Talk About*, for more ideas)

### → Use Resources to Find Information

After you decide what project you are doing it is a good idea to do more research on what area your project will be focusing on. There are some resources listed at the back of this book that can provide you with information but internet sources, teachers, a nurse or doctor, and the library are all good resources when it comes to finding information about health and wellness. This may be done by the whole group or one individual may be in charge of getting all of the facts.

### → Get Creative

This is the time where everyone brain storms how they think the project should look in order to get the message across to as many people as possible. Think of things that will catch people's eye or attention. This could involve anything from posters to guest speakers and it is really a matter of deciding which idea to focus on. As mentioned above, page 14 is full of great ideas that you and your peers came up with for other action plans. Try to pick something realistic with the time you have and for the number of people involved. This should be a group choice so that everyone is excited about the project creating more unity and less friction within the group.

### → Organize Your Plan

When taking on a project it is important to stay organized and come up with a detailed outline that you intend to stick to. Everyone can be assigned a different task to spread out the work and get everyone involved. Assigning someone in the group to be a Project Leader helps take stress off of the group leader and allows everyone a chance to get involved in leadership. It's important to have regular meetings or even a quick check in (at least once a week) to see how everyone is doing with the part of the project they are working on. Remember to allow time for people to get back to you and for unforeseen problems.

### → **Contact People Who Are in Charge**

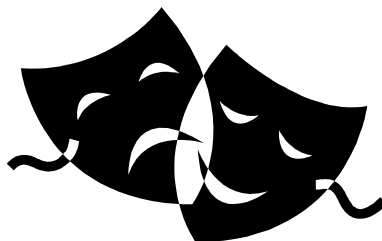
Make sure that you are able to implement your project in a quick and effective manner. The best way to do this is making sure you have the resources and permission from people who oversee your school. For example, a supportive teacher, your Principal or VP need to support your plan and can suggest who you should contact to help make that happen. It's important to remember that you may need permission slips, a safe place to work especially if it's after school hours.

### → **Getting the Word Out About the Project**

When organizing your plan, you need to make sure you advertise what you are doing. The best way is word of mouth, posters, and social networking sites. Other options could be over the morning announcements or even making teachers aware of what you are doing and get them to announce it in class. If there is another group in school who has similar goals make sure to make them aware of your project as well. Only advertise once you have everything set and ready to go, be sure to leave enough time between when you advertise and the event.

### → **Show Time**

Once you have the word out and your youth action plan is a go its show time! Good luck!



→ **Reflection**

After every event there should be at least part of a meeting where members reflect on how the action plan went. Be sure to get everyone to voice their opinions and feelings on how they think the action plan went, and what they would have done differently if they had to do it again. This can be done in a group setting, written up and handed in, or people can keep a journal during the project itself. We all learn from our mistakes and this will make future projects go more smoothly.

Sometimes when you are working on a Youth Action Plan it can feel like there is a lot of work to be done. However, it's important to remember that when it is finished you will feel proud and happy about what you have accomplished!

Be the Change You Wish to See in the World.

-Ghandi



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead

# Helpful "HOW-TOs"

## How to Set Up a Group Meeting

It is really important to stay organized when you are trying to make your project work. The best way to not become overwhelmed is to stay in contact with each other and stay organized. Making a change in your school will feel so much better if everyone is included and informed. Once you have chosen a project, you need to execute your plan. The following are some suggestions on how to organize and run a meeting.

### → Pick A Place

To make a meeting successful you need to pick a place to meet. Most HRY facilitators have meetings at their school. You may be able to reserve your youth health centre space or a supportive teacher's classroom. However, if more meetings are needed or the school is unavailable some other places may be your public library, a community center, coffee shop or someone's home.

### → Time

You need to make sure you set a time when everyone can make it to the meeting. If someone can not make it, make sure what they were bringing to the meeting is passed on to someone else to present or discuss. Most HRY facilitators have found it best to meet during lunch period. However, after school, after work, or on the weekend can work as well. Just try to keep in mind that some people have buses to catch after school or other commitments. Try to pick a time that works for everyone!

### → Spread The Word!

To make your meeting successful, you need to make sure everyone involved in the project knows about it. You should give your peers at least 2 days notice before calling a meeting, or even make it a weekly event so they remember to come. In your very first meeting your Project Leader or secretary can

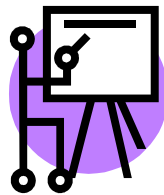
make sure to get everyone's email address, phone number or start a group on a social networking site. This way they can contact everyone and send out meeting reminders. You can also ask to have the meeting announced during morning announcements.

→ **Set an Agenda.**

Make a plan and create deadlines! It is important to set goals for your project. You may want to make a list of items or an agenda to discuss at the meeting. During the meeting it is good to have someone recording what is being said and done as well as what has been completed. Please see more information in the *Group Roles* section below. If you have the ability to photocopy the agenda you create, you may want to hand out copies to group members. This information can be kept for your records and can also be shared with other HRY teams in the future. If you set an agenda and stick to it your project will be a success!

Agenda Example:

- Check In
- Let each member speak about what they are working on- what is completed and what is not
  - Remind everyone of due dates
  - Remind everyone about next meeting
- Check Out



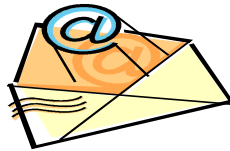
→ **Check Out**

To make a meeting successful, it is important to go over what you have discussed. Now would be a good time to have the minutes of the meeting discussed. Make sure you check in with your peers and allow time for questions and concerns. You may want to go over what is working and what is not working with your plan. Keep in mind that everyone has ideas that can be helpful, try to remember to let everyone shine!

## **How to write and e-mail...Like a Professional!**

Part of your action plan may require contacting and organizing other groups and community agencies by email. Your organization/group and purpose should be in the e-mail subject line. Be brief and DO NOT use slang, ALWAYS refer to the person in a respectable manner, Dear, (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., ect.) and end the e-mail with a sincerely, yours truly or thank you.

If you are setting up a meeting, list off times you are available in order to reduce the number of e-mails, what you wish to discuss and why you are contacting them. Then show up prepared and looking respectable. Write down notes of what you wished to discuss and bring something to record their answer if it is lengthy. Remember to leave up to four or five days for their response.



## **How to set up a meeting ...Like a Professional!**

You may need to set up a meeting with other groups and community members or agencies. This will be different from working with your friends. Setting up a meeting is much the same as writing an e-mail. Be respectful, use respectful and formal language, not slang. List off the times you are available to cut down on the amount of e-mails that are sent. When a time and place has been decided on, show up promptly on that decided time, dress respectably, prepare what you wish to talk about and always be respectful.

# Group Roles and Responsibilities

## → Divide the Work

When it comes to organizing your project remember that one person can not organize and get a project going on their own so it is best to divide the work equally among members of your group. This is best done by designating a project leader who may or may not be the HRY leader. This way everyone gets a chance to be in a leadership position and the HRY leader is not overwhelmed with every project.

## Group Roles for your group meetings

To make the project run smoothly everyone in the group should have a different role. These roles do not need to stay the same for the entire year, but may be helpful while working on one project. Being a leader is a very good thing, but we need to remember that everyone has this potential and sharing work lets everyone put their footprint on the project. Plus doing everything on your own can be overwhelming and your project may not be completed on time!

Here are some suggestions for roles:

### Group Leader:

- This is the person who is in charge of the group as a whole. They lead all of the meetings, set up times for them and are in general the leaders of the HRY group.

### Project Leader:

- The Project Leader is assigned to be in charge of one or more projects a year and is the coordinator and organizer which takes the pressure off of the Group Leader. The project leader is the one in charge of assigning people jobs and sticking to the agenda in order to get the job done. This system also gives everyone who wants to be a leader a chance to be one.

**Time Keeper:**

- Is in charge of watching the time during the meeting, to make sure you don't go over the allotted time.
- Makes sure all of the agenda items get discussed during the meeting.

**Vibe Watcher:**

- Is in charge of noting how people are feeling during the meeting- for example looking to see if people are emotional, angry, upset, uncomfortable etc.
- It is their responsibility to deal with these feelings. For example, they could suggest a time out or even a game to lighten the mood.
- Discussing issues related to health and relationships can get emotional for some people, encourage group members to talk to a supportive adult if they continue to experience upsetting feelings after you have listened supportively.

**Minute Taker or Secretary:**

- Is responsible to record everything that happens during the meeting. However it is important to have some guidelines to follow. Here are some suggestions:

- Record the date, time and location of the meeting. Pass around an attendance sheet
- Only summarize the main points of discussions and their outcomes
- Write down who is planning on doing what
- Record the next meeting's date, time and place and make sure whatever was not touched on is brought up at the next meeting
- Type up the minutes and send them to each group member
- Leave room for additions to the agenda in the minutes
- Try to keep a record of all of the meeting minutes and agendas so they can be referred back to if necessary

**Other Group Members:**

- These people are essential to lifting a project off the ground and are the ones who get specific tasks done for the groups such as contacting a guest speaker or setting up a meeting with the principal to ask permission for your project.



## HRV Youth Action Plans

### Guysborough Academy

We, the Guysborough Academy Healthy Relationship for Youth group, decided to collaborate with the Guysborough Academy GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) to host an event in aid of the local food bank, as our Youth Action Plan. We also worked with Leona Purcell, a Public Health Nurse that works at the Youth Health Centre, and Marguerite McGillivray, with Schools Plus.

We decided to host a '**Holiday Cheer**' talent show featuring local talent. We collected non-perishable food items or an admission of five dollars, and donations were greatly accepted. We chose the local food bank because they are in dire need of support, especially during the holiday season.

This event was held on Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. It lasted two hours, and we had an astonishing turn out raising over four-hundred dollars and two-hundred non-perishable food items. The 'Holiday Cheer' concert took place at our local Performing Arts Centre, within our school.

In order to make this event happen, we had to form a sub-committee. We had regular meetings several times a week. We had to decide when we were going to have the event, and what funding/materials we would need. We all volunteered to do specific jobs, such as working at the door collecting admission and donations, selling fifty-fifty tickets, and various other jobs.

We had a great response from our community. We received many compliments, and words of praise about how enjoyable and well put together our event was. The local food bank representative also contributed a thank you letter in the school newsletter to make the community aware of how appreciative they were of our hard work. The audience enjoyed listening to the local musicians, and were happy to support such a great cause, which would give back to our community.

We believe that youth can make a huge difference. Whether it be in our school, community or even the world. If we put our minds to it, we can accomplish great things. Organization is extremely important when creating a Youth Action Plan. It ensures that things will run smoothly, and go according to plan.

### Inverness Academy

Youth facilitators at Inverness Academy are planning to host a **Variety Concert** to be held during their Winter Carnival in which they will raise money for a charity.

### St. Mary's Academy

Youth facilitators at St. Mary's Academy collaborated with the Healthy Active Lifestyles (HALT) Team for a school wide **Challenge Day**. This challenge day is to encourage empathy among youth and promote awareness of services that can help them face certain challenges. Local service providers were invited in to answer questions in a series of small group discussions. Some agencies invited include: Addictions Services, Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, RCMP, Naomi Society, and Public Health.

### Dalbrae Academy

HRY Presents...**Speak Up (Students Promoting Equity and Acceptance through Knowledge, Understanding and Prevention)**. The HRY Youth Facilitators at Dalbrae with the support of the teacher Chrissie Hawley put together this day for violence prevention. The day began with guest speaker followed by an afternoon of workshops. Guest workshop presenters included: SANE, Leaside, Addiction Services, Youth Project, the RCMP, and the Youth Health Centre. The HRY youth facilitators presented workshops on Media and Stereotyping and another on Privilege and Oppression. The youth facilitators of Cape Breton Highlands Academy attended as well as all grade 9 and 10 students from Inverness Academy. This day was funded by the Lighthouses Program by the NS Department of Justice and was a success due to the dedication of supportive teachers and all the youth facilitators.

This year the Dalbrae HRY team is planning to host a day of workshops and awareness on healthy relationships. They have invited local service providers from agencies like Public Health, Leaside Transition House, and S.A.N.E. Program to engage youth in information sessions and question period with their fellow high school students. The youth facilitators plan to participate with the presenters on this day.

### Canso Academy

The youth facilitators at Canso Academy are currently working on developing a **Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA)** in their school. One HRY youth facilitator participated in a Leaders of Today Conference (LOT 5) for youth across Nova Scotia and she brought this idea forward. Other Eastern Region youth also wanted to start a GSA in their school, or already had a GSA and wanted to help others. This ignited the spark for creating the **GSA Symposium** planning committee. This HRY youth facilitator from Canso is taking the lead role for the HRY team in Canso by participating in teleconference planning of a GSA Symposium on April 5, 2011. The symposium will invite youth from the Strait Regional School Board, Cape Breton-Victoria School Board, and French schools in this North-Eastern region of the Conseil Scholaire Acadien Provincial. Members of the planning committee are: Child and Youth Strategy Specialist, Donna Deveaux-MacLeod, the HRY Co-ordinator, Addiction Services, Youth Health Centre - Public Health Nurse, and other students and supportive adults from the Eastern Region.

### Cape Breton Highlands Academy

Youth facilitators at Cape Breton Highland Academy are working with their "HRY" teacher, Carrie Doucet, and Carolyn Spears, Public Health Nurse as well as the youth health team to plan a **Day of Diversity** that the entire school from P-12 can take part in. This will happen in the spring.



## Let's Give em Something to Talk About!

When trying to choose a topic or issue to discuss it can be difficult to have a focus. However, there are many topics to raise awareness around... Here are some helpful ideas!

This is what some groups have thought of to focus on in the past:

- Sexism
- Racism
- Collaborating with the *GSA* (*Gay Straight Alliance*)
- African Heritage group
- Collaborating with *MADD* (*Mothers Against Drunk Driving*) in some way for an action plan
- Mi'kmaq Cultural awareness
- Breast Cancer/ Prostate Cancer/ Testicular Cancer awareness
- Women's History Month
- LGBTQ History Month
- Black History Month
- Sexual Assault awareness
- Violence Against Women: December 6<sup>th</sup>
- Dating Violence Awareness
- Sexual orientation information or awareness



## Need a few Ideas?

**Walk-a-thon-** This is a hike or walk that can raise awareness and/or money for almost any cause. Just remember to make it fun (perhaps by soaking walkers with supper soakers) and incorporating lots of groups (perhaps have the school band walk and play or have a performance by them at the end of the walk). Food is also a good idea at the end of this activity.

Raise money for a cause by hosting **A Variety Concert or Talent Show**;  
Run the **snack bar** at school events and sports games or place a **donation jar** at other school events

A Day of Remembrance and Action against **Violence Against Women**  
Bring in the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner nurses from the Antigonish Women's Centre to give presentations.

**Write Love on Her Arms-** This is an organization that raises money and awareness for depression, addiction, self injury and suicide. More information, go to their website: <http://www.twloha.com/>

**A Day of Purple** to commemorate those who have committed suicide as a result of being the targets of homophobic bullying and harassment,

**A Day of Silence-** this is a day where people sign a contract to stay silent for the entire day in order to promote awareness of how in the closet homosexuals and questioning individuals feel within society.

Create a **Wall of Pride** featuring famous and successful LGBTQ people

**30 hour famine-** this is done to raise money and awareness for poverty around the world and the funds should go to a charitable organization.

Put on **skits**, they are fun and informative while challenging oppression

Implement a **breakfast program** at school

Host a **Spirit Day**

Have information placed in the daily **announcements**

Have leadership **training sessions** to further develop your skills

# Creating Group Unity!

## → Team Building

Team building is essential to success of all groups and activities. If your team does not know each other, feel accepted for who they are in one another's presence and know how to work together your project will suffer. People will be afraid to speak their ideas and come to the forefront as leaders because of potential judgement from the group.

### Snacks

One thing that never fails to bond people together is sharing food. If one person each week wants to be in charge of bringing a snack to the meeting this is always welcome.



### Check-Ins

At the beginning of each meeting you may want to have a 'check-in' time. This involves going around the room mentioning what was good and bad about your week/month/day and then answering a funny explorative question such as 'if you were to be an animal what would it be?' or 'what is your biggest fear?' This way, team members get to know each other and what is going on in others lives. This team building activity brings the group together around laughs or sentiment and allows team growth due to the personal nature of this exercise.

### Games

Try a trivia night; you will be amazed by what some people know. Or play a silly game like blob tag which is a game where one person is it and has to tag someone who then they link arms with and try to chase others. This continues until everyone is linked in a chain chasing after the last person.

## → Just starting out

When starting out as a new group or at the beginning of the school year team building games and group activities to get to know each other create the sense of community groups want in order to achieve their maximum potential.

### **Person Bingo**

In this version, the bingo cards are things people do or have done such as 'play an instrument' and everyone has to go around and meet new people to fill up their card.

### **Quick Get-to-know you**

A 3-minute get to know and answer questions about a randomly assigned partner and then present them to the group.

### **Never-have-I-Ever....**

One game that gets people moving and gets them to know each other better is the never-have-I-Ever game. Everyone stands in a circle around one person and that person has to say something they have never done like "Never-have-I-ever been water skiing." And everyone who has been has to leave their place in the circle and find a new one. Who ever is left in the middle is the new person to ask the question of the group.

Ask if other group members know some other fun games they can share with the group!



# Self Care

Self care is one of the most important aspects of every day life. It is easy to get caught up in work, especially around the time your action plan is taking place. Life is a balancing act and if balanced improperly it can lead to poor health, poor grades, and suffering relationships. But, if time is taken to recharge and relax, you can become more productive with the time you spend working.

**When is it time to say no?** ...You know yourself best and if you are ever feeling overwhelmed see what you can say no to in your life.

## → Time management for yourself

As previously mentioned time management is a huge part of self care and understanding your own boundaries. One key to time management is to evaluate what you have to do and then allot different amounts of time for each thing. Scheduling can give you deadlines to meet and allow for a more productive you.



## → De-stress, relaxation and me-time

Try to save time every day for you to de-stress. Whether this is going to the gym, reading a book, seeing friends, or playing a sport these things are important to you and the way you function. Without these activities your body and mind do not get a chance to relax and this can result in unnecessary amounts of stress which may be reflected in your work and health.



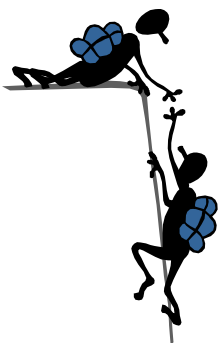
## Where to Get Help in School

For all students participating in Healthy Relationships for Youth Program or any other in-school group, it is important to know that there are resources available to help you if you are experiencing violence, bullying or abuse. Our first concern is for your safety and well being.

If you need someone to talk to, provide support for you, or help you to work through personal issues, you can contact any of the following people in your school:

- Guidance Counsellor
- A teacher you trust
- Youth Health Services Centre
- Mi'kmaq Student Support Worker
- Student Support Worker

Remember: If the first person you talk to is not helpful, keep trying until you find someone who will help.



## Where to get help in the Community

- ☞ Antigonish Women's Resource Centre &  
Sexual Assault Services Association  
Antigonish 863-6221; Guysborough County Outreach: 863-8668
- ☞ Kids Help Line, Toll Free: 1-800-668-6868
- ☞ Mi'kmaq Family and Child Services: 1-800-263-8686
- ☞ Native Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-877-209-1266
- ☞ Paq'tnkek Medical Centre, Paq'tnkek: 386-2048
- ☞ LGBT Youth Line: 1-800-566-2437
- ☞ Children's Aid Society of Inverness-Richmond: 625-0660
- ☞ Child Protection Services, Department of Community Services:  
Antigonish: 863-32  
Guysborough: 533-4007  
AFTER REGULAR OFFICE HOURS: 1-866-922-2434
- ☞ Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia  
Antigonish-Guysborough: 863-2358 Inverness-Richmond: 625-0131
- ☞ Call your family doctor or the Hospital Emergency Department;  
St. Martha's: 863-2830  
St. Mary's Memorial Hospital: 522-2882  
Guysborough Memorial: 533-3702  
Strait Richmond Hospital: 6253100

\*All of these services are available to you and are free of charge.

## References

-Youth Action Network, comp. *Fire It Up! A Toolkit for Youth Action Plan*. Youth Action Network, 2002. Print.

-Garrett, Lisa. *The Girl's Guide to Antigonish and Guysborough Counties*. Violence against Women and Girls: A Rural Response, 2009. Print.

And a big thanks to all of the students. Most of these ideas are yours and we could not have done it without you!