

# Youth Peer Educators: Guidelines & Resources for CAPP & PREP

CAPP and PREP projects that involve youth peer educators in delivering evidence-based programs aim to increase youth engagement in the EBPs as well as influence young people to increase the use of condoms, other contraceptive methods, and reproductive health services. Although the research about the effectiveness of youth peer educators in regard to behavior change is inconclusive (see Research Facts & Findings article on this topic: [http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf\\_peer-ed\\_0317.pdf](http://www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_peer-ed_0317.pdf)), this approach holds the promise of increasing young people’s participation in sexual health education.

To aid CAPP and PREP providers who want to prepare young people to co-facilitate EBPs, ACT for Youth has reviewed recommended practices in peer education.

## Who is a youth peer educator?

Youth peer educators (ages 15 – 25) are high school or college students or young adults who voluntarily participate in providing program services. They are not regularly employed by the CAPP or PREP agency. They may volunteer their services or they may receive a stipend or credit.

If they are college students who do a full year internship with the agency and qualify for part-time employment, they are not considered youth peer educators. If they engage in EBP implementation, they are required to complete the same training requirements as CAPP/PREP educators.

## Which EBPs allow peer education?

YES	NO
Be Proud! Be Responsible! Making Proud Choices ¡Cuidate! Be Proud! Be Responsible! Be Protective!	TOP (licensed) Project AIM (licensed) Reducing the Risk SHARP

## Challenges

Common challenges to peer education programs include:

- Training and supervision can be costly and time intensive
- High turnover of peer educators
- Meaningful involvement is critical for motivating and retaining peer educators; building effective youth-adult partnerships can be challenging

Careful planning and attention to these guidelines can help you avoid or cope with these challenges.

## Recruitment of peer educators

Develop criteria for selecting peer educators:

- Who would make a good peer educator? Criteria to consider: ability and willingness to dedicate time to the program; age, sex, educational level; previous experience; pertinent personal qualities (team orientation, flexibility, tolerance, leadership skills)
- Decide how many educators you will need. This depends on the number of cycles and sites in your plan. Keep in mind that not all young people will stay throughout the program year. On the other hand, do not recruit too many. A common issue of peer education programs is having too many educators with insufficient resources to support them.
- Do they represent or reflect your priority population? Recruit young people with similar demographics from your programs and from the community you are working in.

## Selection and retention

- Establish a transparent and fair selection process. Clearly communicate expectations and how selection decisions will be made.
- Use a written application form that lays out expectations along with the skills and interests you are looking for (see sample).
- Once a peer educator is selected, create a written agreement or commitment letter for peer educator based on the expectations discussed. Specify educator's activities and working conditions.
- Include a code of conduct that will guide both staff and youth peer educator. (For an example, go to: Evidence-based Guidelines for Youth Peer Education <https://www.fhi360.org/resource/evidence-based-guidelines-youth-peer-education>, p.50 Annex 2)
- Specify length of service. Common practice is to ask for one year with a possible renewal of a second year. At the same time, explain that they can leave at any time if other opportunities should arise.
- Develop a regular schedule for peer educator meetings to share experiences and provide feedback.
- Develop a stipend policy. There is no consensus in the field about the effectiveness of stipends. Providing young people with the opportunity to make meaningful contributions, public recognition, and awards may be more motivating than financial rewards.

## Training of peer educators

- Offer a structured training program for peer educators (topics to cover: sexuality, anatomy & reproduction, STDs/HIV, pregnancy prevention, values, consent, etc.)

- **All peer educators are required to complete the online implementation training** <https://coetraining.net/oit/>. They can do this individually or in group sessions with their supervisor (conducted like an in-service). Request log-in information here: [https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9TZkbVIL5z9k2Sp](https://cornell.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9TZkbVIL5z9k2Sp) .

- Peer educators need to participate in one EBP implementation as learners.
- Pair them with adult educators and have them shadow at least two program sessions.
- Schedule several practice sessions of EBP activities with adult educators who will be co-facilitating with peer educators. Provide concrete positive and corrective feedback and assess further development needs.
- Practice co-facilitation (see attached guidance).

### Sample Peer Education Training Programs

Advocates for Youth: Training Youth to be Peer Educators

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/TAP5.pdf>

United Nations Population Fund & Youth Peer Education Network:  
Youth Peer Education Toolkit. Training of Trainers Manual

<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/peer-education-toolkit>

Population Council: It's All in One Curriculum (sexuality education including the discussion of gender and power relationships)

<https://www.popcouncil.org/research/its-all-one-curriculum-guidelines-and-activities-for-a-unified-approach-to->

### Preparing adult educators to work with youth peer educators

We recommend that adult educators who work with youth peer educators complete the Positive Youth Development 101 online courses:

[http://www.actforyouth.net/youth\\_development/professionals/online\\_courses.cfm](http://www.actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/online_courses.cfm)

In particular, we recommend the course *Youth Voice and Engagement*. It will be important to value young people's contributions in the planning and implementation of the EBP to keep them motivated and engaged.

Adult educators who will be working with youth co-facilitators would benefit from being actively involved in the peer educator training program.

### Reference

Fhi360: Evidence-based Guidelines for Youth Peer Education

<https://www.fhi360.org/resource/evidence-based-guidelines-youth-peer-education>