



Sponsor:

Stand Together Program Description

The Stand Together initiative trains, inspires and equips middle and high school youth to take action against stigma toward youth with mental and/or substance use disorders to reduce negative attitudes, beliefs, and social distance between youth with these disorders and their peers. Stand Together is based upon a service learning model in which students are educated about an issue and then take action to address the issue.

Each participating school will identify an adult advisor to champion Stand Together and select 20 students to participate in the project. Schools are encouraged to identify advisors who have a personal interest in this issue and choose to function as the project advisor and to select student leaders who will be listened to by their peers as well as students who have lived experience with mental and/or substance use disorders to form the core planning group. These 20 students will undergo 2-3 days of training, depending upon the level of participation selected by the school, between September and the middle of November. Each school will choose from one of three levels of participation (described below) and will then implement their anti-stigma project for the student population in their school.

In Day One of the training, students will learn about various mental and substance use disorders as well as the impact of stigma on youth with these disorders through interactive lessons using videos, music, and exercises that actively engage youth in the learning process.

The content of Day Two of training will be determined by the level of participation selected by the advisor and students. For schools selecting levels one or two, students will be given a list of pre-defined projects supplied by the Stand Together staff and will be given a set budget to implement the project along with a description of the steps involved in developing each project. Level one schools will develop one major project. Level two schools will create two major projects. Schools will select their projects and then begin planning the implementation of the project with guidance from the trainer during the workshop.

Schools selecting the third level of participation will define their own projects and will brainstorm strategies for reducing social stigma in their school or community. The goal by the end of the second day is to have a rough outline of the activities that will constitute the project. A third half day of training can take place to assist students to learn about writing a grant proposal and developing a project budget. They will be eligible for up to \$1000 to implement those projects. The project proposal will be submitted within four weeks after the final day of training.

The Allegheny County Dept. of Human Services will provide ongoing support and technical assistance to the schools as they move forward in developing and implementing their projects. Schools will contribute Facebook and Twitter postings as well as photos, videos, and blog postings for the Stand Together website throughout the planning and implementation process. As part of their projects, schools will encourage students to sign the Stop the Stigma petition on the Stand Together website. Schools must complete their projects by the middle of April and submit reports using a format developed by OBH staff. After the projects are completed all participating schools will attend a recognition event in May and will make a three to five minute presentation to other participating schools about their projects. Expenses for this event, including transportation to the event for all schools, is covered by the Stand Together initiative.

For further information on the Stand Together project, please view our website: <http://standtogether.againststigma.org> or contact Danyelle Hooks at danyelle.hooks@alleghenycounty.us.