

CAMPUS COUNCIL PEER EXCHANGE HIGHLIGHTS

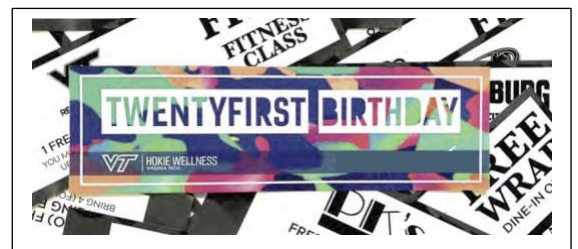
September 13, 2023

Topic: 21st Birthday Project

Kelsey O’Hara shared information about a Virginia Tech program designed to reduce high-risk drinking during 21st birthday celebrations, when students often engage in “bar crawl”-type partying. A week before their 21st birthday, the program invites students to talk with a peer educator and receive a discount book. It uses an evidence-based approach that includes training peer educators in motivational interviewing techniques, targets a high-risk event in a timely way, and incorporates thorough evaluation.

What’s needed to make it happen?

- Intervention script and resources,
- Space for meeting with students (three afternoons each week),
- Staff or student time/training,
- Incentives (coupons from willing businesses),
- Ability and plan to advertise,
- Ability and plan to evaluate, and
- Approval from administration.



Working with Businesses

- Find mutual benefit. Most want to help the community, to be seen in a positive light, and to make a profit.
- Be strategic and persistent when making contact.
- Make it clear that you will uphold your end of the bargain.
- Use your connections and think like a marketer. It is a sales pitch.
- Don’t get discouraged if the first answer is “no”.
- Check in. Adjust as necessary.
- Don’t forget help from students.
- Use business competition to your advantage. Keep it local.

How do you get students to participate in the program?

- A simple email highlighting the coupon book that is timed closely to the student’s birthday works!
- Posters and other more traditional print or social media can be used minimally since students can only participate for a very limited time.

How do we know if it is working?

- Process and outcome evaluation measured:
 - Adherence to chosen strategy,
 - Negative outcomes experienced,
 - Standard drinks consumed,
 - Impact of food coupons,
 - Use of alternative activities

A Sample of Schools with the 21st Birthday program:

Virginia Tech, Syracuse University, University of Oregon, JMU, University of Alaska at Fairbanks, Kansas State University, University of Denver.

Process-related challenges:

- Student birthdates are identifiable information.
- Setting-up the email schedule for advertisement and evaluation can be challenging.
- It can be hard to find semi-private space three afternoons each week within a health/wellness center,
- Coupons need to be secured, but accessible by peer educators.
- A plan needs to be in place for students whose 21st birthdays occur during breaks.
- Sometimes students’ desire for free stuff can be a bit overwhelming!
- Students don’t always read email instructions carefully.