Peer Education: Administrative Issues

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INITIAL BUY-IN
Little Staff Support

• First program, Redemption started 2010
• Not the norm
• Staff telling others to stay away from the program
• They were going to teach about things they shouldn’t
• Inaccurate info would be shared
• Believed there would be more fights/violence
What Changed Their Minds?

• Cost saving & allowed for more programs
  - Staffing
  - Set up offender fund that offenders can donate to buy supplies

• Initially chose very influential offenders (e.g. gang leaders)

• Less fights (taught to intervene and diffuse, but not be snitches)

• Better treatment of staff by teaching respect (initially seen as manipulation!!)

• Less infractions (trouble offenders turned in mentors!)

• When offenders transferred to other facilities they wanted to know how the offender got “fixed” and the program spread
• Concern peer educators would have too much power

• Able to manipulate others

• Would feel superiority

• Puts offenders in control

• Policy states that one inmate cannot be in charge of another = No peer education
MESSAGING

- Clear parameters in facilitator training program about role
- Offenders cannot make decisions to exclude other inmates
- Everyone is allowed to answer & no one is wrong
- Must only teach what is in the curriculum
- Peers rotate running the class, so not just one leader
- Making sure the offender is adequately trained, both in material & in facilitating
  - Class Member
  - Observer
  - Junior Mentor
  - Senior Mentor
LOGISTICS
The Details

• Any offender, regardless of crime, who remains infraction free

• Have offenders sign contract stating “I choose to make positive choices”

• Have to show that they will be a good role model

• Volunteer position for offender, not paid job

• Staff, from all job classes, volunteer to monitor class (custody, clerical, admin)

• Some programs ship offenders to a single facility for training, then they return to their respective facilities
MULTIPLICATION
• Redemption – Life Skills program
• Roots of Success – environmental sustainability program
• Yoga Behind Bars – 100 hr certification
• Project SHIELD – Risk reduction program
Questions