

## ABSTRACT

As part of an 11-month public education project conducted in 1988, the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA) in Jamaica, implemented a number of health education strategies. One such strategy was designed for youths representing three types of agencies, namely, educational institutions, the church and youth agencies. Forty (40) peer counsellors participated in the intervention which took the form of a five-day residential camp, under the guidance of eight camp counsellors most of whom had themselves been previously trained through the NCDA. A recovering addict spent two days in residence with the peer counsellors.

All peer counsellors participated in the pre-test and evaluation while only (63%) participated in the post-test. Most (24, 60%) were actively involved in peer counselling activities since leaving the camp. The expertise of a few had been mobilized by the Council, the large majority had not. Although only 6% indicated that they spent very little of their time in peer counselling in their respective agencies, all but one (2.5%) were actually involved in all drug abuse activities taking place in the agencies.

Through their involvement:

- a) a youth group had been formed at a teacher training college

- b) an executive committee established by one church to address drug abuse issues
- c) the Boys' Scouts movement had conducted public awareness type programmes among that target group
- d) the secondary (high) schools' association was designing ways to address the problem of drug abuse among youths attending secondary schools
- e) peer counsellors had been actively involved in a radio call-in programme produced and hosted by a popular radio personality with a great deal of experience in working with youths in addressing social issues through the mass media

It is concluded that the Council now has the responsibility to harness the creativity of these youths in a sensitive way and provide the stimulation necessary for them to continue to address the problem in a way that only they can, with the appropriate support and guidance.