

PEAK Celebrates 10 Years in North Idaho

The Peers Encouraging Abstinent Kids (PEAK) Program is celebrating 10 years from its implementation into North Idaho schools. PEAK originated in Bonners Ferry during the 1996/1997 school year. Since then, PEAK has grown throughout the entire state. The year before PEAK was implemented in Bonners Ferry, the teen pregnancy rate for girls ages 15-17 was 31.5 per 1,000. The most recent stats available, 2004, show a decline to 20.3 per 1,000 (Idaho Vital Statistics). PEAK is attributed as one of the factors for the decline in teen pregnancies in Idaho. In addition to enabling teens to say 'no' to sex, the assertiveness techniques taught in PEAK are also relevant in other confrontations teens may face, such as smoking and drug-use.

What Is Peak?

PEAK, Peers Encouraging Abstinent Kids, is an abstinence-only mentoring

program targeting sixth and seventh graders. PEAK is based on the nationally recognized skill-based abstinence curriculum, Postponing Sexual Involvement (PSI), created in Atlanta, Georgia at the Grady Health Institute. Trained high school mentors, under the supervision of adult facilitators, deliver the curriculum to the middle school students.

How PEAK Works

The PEAK Program is incorporated into the school curriculum, within the health program. An adult facilitator (an educator, parent or volunteer) is identified in the community to help with recruitment of teen mentors. Once teen mentors are selected and trained, they are placed into teams and enter the middle school class once per week for up to six weeks to deliver lessons on the risks of early sexual involvement, social and peer pressure, learning assertiveness techniques and reinforcing newly acquired skills.

Why Peak Works

By receiving information from mentors serving as role models, the message is delivered most effectively to kids of this age group and maturity level. Adolescents at this age are more concerned with the present than the future. In addition, their physical development is ahead of their cognitive level. Through role-playing and observing behaviors from role models, the adolescents practice and see the skills necessary to make informed decisions.

The abstinence-only curriculum does not send mixed messages to adolescents. It instructs students how to resist pressures to have sex along with the necessary skills to follow through. Students are not simply told, "do not have sex". The teen leaders help the students develop the conclusion on their own that it is best to wait to have sex.

For more information about PEAK contact Brittany Baeumel, PEAK Coordinator at Panhandle Health District, 208-415-5143, the Idaho Care Line at 2-1-1, or online at www.idahoteenpregnancy.com.

Mountain States Early Head Start

Mountain States Early Head Start is a program serving low income pregnant women, children from birth to age 3 and their families in Kootenai and Bonner counties. Staff provide home visits to 113 enrolled families with the primary focus on helping parents learn more about what to expect as their child grows, ensuring their child is healthy and adding practical skills for a strong family.

Monthly family nights offer dinner and fun parent-child activities. Topics for speakers include communication, reading to children, emergency preparedness, stress relief and nutrition. The program has also offered classes in money management, signing with your baby and CPR/First Aid.

Home visits encourage parent-child interaction and provide information about such things as developmental milestones, discipline, making the most of a well child exam, selecting toys and introducing solid foods.

For pregnant women information on pregnancy and fetal development, breastfeeding and adjusting to being a new parent are included. Early Head Start staff also provide suggestions about community resources families can access to meet their needs.

Mountain States Early Head Start services and enrollment, contact Ioana Siegler, 765-6955, ext 257. For Sandpoint area please contact Sheila Farmin-Aumick, 263-2569.

Disability Action Center

Disability Action Center Northwest (DAC) is a non-profit community partnership working to promote self-determination, integration and inclusion of all individuals with disabilities in all aspects of society. Utilizing our collective power, we provide advocacy, education and support while fostering attitudes, policies, and environments of equality and choice.

DAC strives to create a supportive and resourceful community of individuals with disabilities. We encourage people with disabilities to take personal responsibility and to fully participate in society. Ask about the "Personal Assistant" services. You have the right to be in control, make your own choices and to be independent.

For more information, contact our satellite office in Coeur d'Alene at (208) 664-9896 or 1-800-854-9500, or email cda@dacnw.org. Disability Action Center – NW, Inc. 1323 Sherman Ave. Suite 7, Coeur d'Alene.