

June 18, 2008

Minister Margaret Best,
Ministry of Health Promotion
777 Bay Street, 18th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Dear Minister Best:

During its June 18, 2008 meeting, the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) passed a resolution to support ongoing and enhanced Ministry of Health Promotion funding of Youth Action Alliances (YAAs) and to expand the work to the broader Simcoe Muskoka area; and to identify to the Ministry of Health Promotion the need for further funding to support the expansion of YAAs to address other healthy lifestyle topic areas.

The Board further directed that its support for the continued and enhanced funding for YAAs be communicated to the Minister of Health Promotion, local MPPs, Premier McGuinty, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, and to the boards of health throughout Ontario. Please find enclosed a briefing note including resolution 08-08.

Sincerely,



Dennis Roughley,
Chair, Board of Health

DR:pgc

Attch (2)

c. Premier of Ontario
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Youth Action Alliances

Resolution 08- 08

WHEREAS the Ministry of Health Promotion, Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy has established peer leadership programs called Youth Action Alliances (YAAs) within each health unit to teach young people the skills needed to work on policy related tobacco control issues;

AND WHEREAS, YAAs aim to involve middle and high school age youth in community-based tobacco control activities that promote youth participants' understanding of how, through collective action, they can positively affect change in their community and change social norms that support manufactured tobacco use to counter tobacco industry marketing practices;

AND WHEREAS the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) has received funding for a Barrie based YAA (article 4) since 2005 and been successful in meeting the Scopes of Service requirements;

AND WHEREAS the Minister of Health Promotion Margaret Best, challenged YAAs to include other healthy lifestyle issues within the tobacco control work that is being done when possible in 2008;

AND WHEREAS the SMDHU Board of Health has identified the value of employing youth to address issues of public health importance and to develop their leadership skills;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Health for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit calls upon the Ministry of Health Promotion to:

- i) continue funding for YAAs and enhance funding to broaden the peer leadership program work beyond the City of Barrie to include the other geographies within the health unit; and
- ii) provide additional funding to enhance YAAs' expansion to include other healthy lifestyle topics.

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Health request that the Ministry of Health Promotion engage in consultations with health units to determine the most appropriate model for this expansion;

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the SMDHU Board of Health communicate its support for the continued and enhanced funding for YAAs to the Minister of Health Promotion, local MPPs, Premier McGuinty, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, and to the boards of health throughout Ontario.



Chair, Board of Health

June 18, 2008
Date

SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT
Briefing Note

Youth Action Alliances

Update: 1

Date: June 18, 2008

Issue:

The Smoke-Free Ontario Youth Action Alliances (YAAs) have been an effective strategy for engaging youth in tobacco control initiatives. Ongoing funding through the Ministry of Health Promotion to continue and expand this tobacco prevention work is desired. The Board of Health previously expressed interest in expansion of this peer leadership model to include broader healthy lifestyle topics. This potential expansion needs to also be considered for implementation in a manner that provides the structure and support integral to the success of youth engagement work.

Recommendations:

That the Board of Health endorses resolution 08-08 to:

1. support ongoing and enhanced Ministry of Health Promotion funding of YAAs and to expand the work to the broader Simcoe Muskoka area.
2. identify to the Ministry of Health Promotion the need for further funding to support the expansion of YAAs to address other healthy lifestyle topic areas.

Current Facts:

The Ministry of Health Promotion has provided 2008 funding for the continued implementation of YAAs within the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy. At the Ontario Youth Summit held from May 23 – 25, 2008, Minister of Health Promotion Margaret Best, challenged YAAs to include other healthy lifestyle issues, when possible, within the tobacco control work that is being done this year.

In 2007, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) YAA worked more than 2800 hours on youth-oriented tobacco control programming. This work involved the development and implementation of over 10 activities ranging from educational campaigns and promotional events, to policy related advocacy strategies, which garnered 35 earned media spots. Such committed work requires youth to be passionate about the issue and willing to work 8 to 10 hours a week for 48 weeks of the year. This work placement requires training and education in the specific topic area in order to develop the knowledge and skill level to be able to plan and implement policy-related activities. In addition, the youth advisor and the program manager are required to provide intensive support, direction and structure to the peer leaders in the YAA in order to ensure effective and productive work is undertaken. By requesting that existing YAAs

SIMCOE MUSKOKA DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Briefing Note

broaden their scope without additional supports, it risks diluting the important tobacco control work being accomplished and stretching the capacity and energy of the present members.

Utilizing the YAA model to address other healthy lifestyle issues requires additional funding and support. By expanding the model to focus on other topic areas, it would allow for the same use of a youth-engagement model and opportunities for skill development, while allowing youth to become engaged and focus on topics in which they are interested. Expansion of the model would require the hiring of additional youth and youth advisors, increased program manager support, and training and education in the specific healthy lifestyle topic areas.

The Ministry of Health Promotion is encouraged to consider the factors required in expanding the YAA model to address other healthy lifestyle topic areas while ensuring any expansion maintains an integrated approach within a chronic disease prevention framework. Consultation with health units about options regarding models that might be appropriate should occur before any expansion is initiated.

Background:

In 2005 SMDHU was successful in receiving competitive grant funding through the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy to create a YAA. In 2006 SMDHU again received funding, one of only 50 percent of health units in the province that received funding. In 2007, due to the success of the model, the Ministry of Health Promotion decided to provide funding to all health units for the creation of YAAs, which has now continued into 2008.

YAAs are peer leadership programs teaching young people the skills needed to work on policy-related tobacco control issues. Activities primarily engage youth in local action to prevent tobacco use as well as activities that reduce second-hand smoke exposure, refer to cessation services and increase awareness of tobacco issues.

YAAs aim to involve middle and high school age youth in community-based tobacco control activities that promote youth participants' understanding of how, through collective action, they can positively affect change in their community and change social norms that support manufactured tobacco use and counter tobacco industry marketing practices.

YAAs engage youth in action-oriented activities that teach the needed skills and provide leadership opportunities to work on policy-related tobacco control issues in order to improve the health status of their community.

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