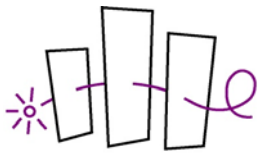


We Believe

By Jennifer Rauhouse – Peer Solutions



Peer Solutions

We are all Peers, We are all the Solution.

At the heart of Peer Solutions Inc. (PSI) activities is ending sexual violence. We believe in cultivating a world free from sexual violence, that is, *A World of Peace, Love and Respect*. Our youth with staff, family and community support spend time creating the change they wish to see.

What IS Stand and Serve?



STAND & SERVE (S&S) is a student-run club at elementary through secondary schools hosted by Peer Solutions. **S&S** members replace false norms with accurate information, highlighting and encouraging the **positive** qualities of today's youth and adults. Sexual Violence is linked with dating, family (including child abuse) and school violence, self-injury, suicide, depression, oppression, substance abuse, eating disorders and homelessness.

"Since my involvement with STAND & SERVE, I am capable of opening minds, aiding in prevention, and even changing my own life. Because of the things I talk to the kids about, I am now able to improve my mindset and my self-esteem. I have been able to stop blaming myself for the abuse and neglect, and now I can see that as a five-year-old, I did nothing to warrant my inflictions. I can also have relationships, and I am more likely to trust people. I am not by any means "all better", but Peer Solutions has given me the chance to take a step towards a brighter future than I could ever have expected.... Peer Solutions is a step in the direction of change, and I personally, would give the world to see more steps, and more hearts, follow that path."
Peer Ed Since 2004



STAND & SERVE (S&S) Activities Include:

- 1) Weekly meetings with discussions and projects at high schools before, during lunch and after school.
- 2) Weekly peer education workshops with middle schools after school.
- 3) Monthly training, peer mentor projects with elementary students and school, family and community awareness and resource referral campaigns.
- 4) On-going workshops, community service, retreats and evaluation.

Lessons Learned: 90% of behavior is learned through modeling. Dr. V. LaCerva

- 1. Build & Maintain Relationships...** with students, staff, family, funders, coalitions, community members and more. Get to know participants. Build trust, ask questions, listen, remember names, know, and love who they are!
- 2. A Positive Approach Works.** We show the positive and name the truth, helps to get school approval. We address Media with Positive Media Attention. (To name is to reinforce. We do not name myths/stereotypes and we say NO to scare tactics, emotional appeals and negative campaigns.)
- 3. We are all Peers.** We are all the Solution. Peers learn best from each other, see and hear what is really going on and are excellent referral agents. Our students work in collaboration with all ages to create a world of peace and respect and when they see/hear something that is not ok, when safe, they respond immediately and informed with empathy, compassion and resources.
- 4. Linking the underlying conditions of several issues strengthens efforts.**
- 5. Activities are Ongoing and FUN!** Ask students what they like, want and think is fun. Helps with retention. (We provide few one-time presentations but can be useful as a recruiting tool.)
- 6. Feed program participants.** This is a great incentive to get participants in the door and to come back for more. Many students would not eat if we did not provide food. Snacks for after-school programs are essential.
- 7. After School Peer Education Projects Rawk.** We pay Peer Eds a stipend per month.
- 8. Design program to meet the needs of each school/organization to ensure cultural /ethnic relevance.** Include students, staff, family and community in development, implementation and evaluation. Tailor activities to meet the needs of participants I.e., Hold activities at a time/location where students can attend. Invite students to join your board.
- 9. Utilize Experts/Consultants/Researchers.** They are very willing to help.
- 10. We've Got To Have ♥!** Starts in our hearts, homes, work-place, schools and communities. *We must be the change we wish to see. Gandhi*

Peer Solutions Overview

Our Vision: That individuals internalize respect in thought, reflect it in action, and spread it to others, resulting in an increase of peace in our hearts, homes, schools and communities.

Our Mission: To cultivate positive social change and end interpersonal violence by uniting schools, families and communities with **STAND & SERVE**, a peer facilitated, prevention and intervention support program fostering peace, respect, empathy and ownership of the solution.

Evidence Base & Evaluation:

Peer Solutions relies on science-based theories: Developmental Assets, Community Development, Social Norms, Peer Education/Mentoring and Social Change/Marketing. We adhere to the *9-Principals of Effective Prevention*.¹ Evaluation efforts include: Pre-Post Assessments with a current average of 65% positive change, Campus Climate and Satisfaction Surveys and Data Collection Forms. Plans include implementing the SEARCH Institute DAP Survey and a comprehensive evaluation with a local university and support from national experts.

Thank you for taking your time to review this article. I have spent the past 25 years working to end sexual violence. For the first time, in a long time, I believe there is reason for hope and I am not alone. I have heard from the Northeast, Southwest, Southeast, Northwest and in between. We are having real discussions, learning from and supporting each other. I feel this unbelievable sense of community, cooperation, and commitment to primary prevention (stopping the problem before it happens). There is an understanding that the most effective efforts involve individual communities defining their own problems and owning the solutions. What works in one area may not work in another. And that's okay. No matter what we do, together we are stronger. Regardless of differences, *WE ALL WANT THE SAME THING, A World Free From Sexual Violence*, that is, *A World of Peace, Love and Respect*.

¹ Nation, M., Crusto, C., Wandersman, A., Kumpfer, K. L., Seybolt, D., Morrissey-Kane, E., & Davino, K. (2003). What works in prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs. *American Psychologist*, *58*, 449-456.