

The StreetWorks Tool Kit: Handbook for Outreach Worker Supervisors

Special Considerations for Peer Outreach
Workers and Youth Interns Included
2nd Edition August 2019



WALKING ALONGSIDE YOUNG PEOPLE
Acknowledging and Honoring their Individual Journeys



Developed by:

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We wish to acknowledge the efforts of so many in ensuring the success of our work and making this project possible.

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Project Partners

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In addition to those experts who contributed to the pilot version of the training, we want to thank all of the experts in the Safe Harbor field who shared their valuable experience, insights and passion during this second phase, allowing us to keep building on that original work.

We want to thank our partners across Greater Minnesota, the directors, managers and line staff of programs from diverse communities in the state, experts on their communities and advocates for the youth in those communities, who gave us their time and leadership to ensure that this training would work in their communities.

We want to thank all of our peer outreach workers and youth interns who contributed to this manual. We also wholeheartedly thank the youth who participated in the focus groups across the state. It would have been impossible to write this without their guidance and encouragement. For all of the research that went into ensuring that this training would be evidence based, it was the words of the youth that often made the biggest impact on the direction we went with this project.

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INTRODUCTION TO STREETWORKS OUTREACH WORKER CERTIFICATION TRAINING CURRICULUM



Letter from the Director

Having experienced homelessness and housing instability myself for many years of my adolescence, I know firsthand what an enormous impact a relationship with a caring, healthy adult can make in a youth's life.

While homeless, my street family and I regularly frequented two small drop-in centers in the Twin Cities, both current partner organizations with StreetWorks. Drop-in centers during those days were nothing fancy—programs operated on shoestring budgets. Fortunately, the most important thing they gave to us required no money. It was the positive, impactful, authentic relationships that were developed with us, despite our tough exteriors and difficult situations, that helped me to see myself through a different lens and envision a new reality that changed the course of my life.

Relationship development is the very heart of our work at StreetWorks.

Once I got back on my feet, I had the honor of being a StreetWorks outreach worker for six years of my career. This experience reinforced that authentic relationship development is the linchpin to interrupting sexual exploitation and homelessness.

The theme of relationship development is interwoven throughout this manual. While the skills developed here are intended for outreach workers, our hope is that other youth-work staff will be able to glean important skills from this, as well. Despite the fact that these skills are presented in the context of training youth workers, they are skills that are valuable outside of this field; skills like active listening, cultural responsiveness and positive youth development, which is actually positive HUMAN development.

In 2015, I had the privilege of stepping into the role of Director of Metro Homeless Youth Services and the StreetWorks Collaborative. Because of my personal experiences, I have a huge passion for this work and have spent my career dedicated to creating new realities for youth experiencing homelessness and exploitation. I am enormously thankful to the youth we serve and the numerous outreach workers, past and present, who do this difficult work with pride and passion every day. I learn new things from these individuals continuously.

StreetWorks couldn't do this work without the efforts of an entire community of like-minded individuals, committed to ending homelessness and sexual exploitation for youth. Outreach is life-changing work and I am honored to partner with this amazing Collaborative.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jen Fairbourne".

Jen Fairbourne

*Director of Metro Homeless Youth Services, including The StreetWorks Collaborative
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota*

HISTORY OF THIS PROJECT

This project was made possible through a Safe Harbor grant funded through the Minnesota Department of Human Services Office of Economic Opportunity, as a way to ensure outreach workers are effectively trained in responding to youth who are at-risk of, or who have been, sexually exploited.

A Background and Summary of Safe Harbor

In 2011, Minnesota became the fifth state in the nation to pass Safe Harbor legislation decriminalizing prostitution charges for youth under the age of 18. Through a statewide multidisciplinary collaborative process, Minnesota developed one of the most comprehensive models for responding to the commercial sexual exploitation of youth: No Wrong Door. Minnesota's No Wrong Door Response Model creates a statewide infrastructure for service delivery, specialized housing and shelter, training for systems professionals, and the development of community-specific protocols across the state. In 2016, the age of eligibility to receive Safe Harbor services was increased to include at-risk and sexually exploited youth ages 24 and under.

Working definition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth (who is eligible for services): Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth (CSEY) occurs when someone 24 or under engages in commercial sexual activity. A commercial sexual activity occurs when anything of value or a promise of anything of value (e.g., money, drugs, food, shelter, rent, or higher status in a gang or group) is given to a person by any means in exchange for any type of sexual activity. A third party may or may not be involved.

Key Points

Safe Harbor is structured under the Minnesota Department of Health, which offers a public health and public safety focus. A public health focus encourages victim-centered and harm-reduction services, also allowing for prevention efforts. This view shifts the criminal justice focus to the perpetrators, such as the buyers and the traffickers, instead of on the exploited youth.

No Wrong Door Model has a multidisciplinary and multijurisdictional approach. This ensures that no matter where a youth is identified, whether through schools, advocacy groups, clinics, child protection, law enforcement, or other avenues, every professional will be able to identify exploitation and will know where to refer the youth for services.

Values and philosophies of No Wrong Door Response Model

- Those who come into contact with youth should be trained to identify exploitation.
- Youth who are sexually exploited are victims of a crime.
- Victims should not feel afraid, isolated or trapped.
- Sexual exploitation is traumatic. Victim-centered services should be based in trauma-informed care.
- Services should be responsive to needs of youth (gender-responsive, culturally competent, age appropriate, and supportive for LGBTQ youth).
- Services should be offered statewide.
- Youth have a right to privacy and self-determination.
- Services should be based in positive youth development.
- Sexual exploitation can be prevented.

Regional Navigators stationed throughout the state can help professionals with technical assistance, connect youth with services, provide professional and community trainings and assist with protocol development.

Outreach plays a critical part of the No Wrong Door Response Model implemented in Minnesota, addressing needs by meeting youth where they are at, connecting them to needed resources including basic needs, case management, the Regional Navigator, and shelter/housing, as well as educating the broader community to raise awareness of this epidemic and engage everyone in the fight to end sexual exploitation of youth.

Outreach workers may be the first point of contact for many youth and can assist in numerous ways, even if youth aren't ready or willing to access mainstream resources. Outreach workers are the safe, adult presence on the streets, helping build trusting relationships with youth that may have had trust destroyed by other adults in their life.

Through the Facilitator's Guide, Outreach Worker Field Experience Work Book, Supervisor's Handbook, numerous handouts and accompanying videos, this project ensures an evidence-based, comprehensive, skills-based certification process for outreach workers both within the StreetWorks Collaborative, as well as in other communities.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND OF THE STREETWORKS COLLABORATIVE

StreetWorks Collaborative (SWC) provides a coordinated intervention to meet the immediate needs of runaway youth and youth experiencing homelessness. We aim to interrupt exploitation by providing valuable resources, connection to services, and regular interaction with a trust-worthy adult. Our collaborative model has proven to be an effective way to conduct coordinated outreach across a broad metro area.

StreetWorks has provided street-based outreach to youth ages 14-24 experiencing homelessness and sexual exploitation in the Twin Cities Metro since 1994. StreetWorks became an official program of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota in 2015 and remains committed to the collaborative approaches that ensure our success. There are currently 14 partners combining efforts to meet the needs of youth in our community through street and site-based outreach. We are the largest outreach collaborative in Minnesota serving homeless youth.

StreetWorks Collaborative Mission/Purpose/Values:

Mission — We provide collaborative leadership, outreach, education, and systems reform, as we walk alongside young people at-risk of, or experiencing homelessness and exploitation.

Primary Purpose — To empower, connect and support young people in making lasting change in their lives and communities.

We Believe – As a collaborative, StreetWorks believes that youth are resilient, full of hope, dreams, and potential—having the ability to succeed in life despite their histories of abuse, exploitation, neglect, and/or abandonment.

LSS/StreetWorks and our partners were part of a collaborative process to shape and develop the “9 Evidenced Based Guiding Principles to Help Youth Overcome Homelessness” to ensure that programs and services offered to young people through SWC are:

1. Journey-Oriented
2. Trauma-Informed
3. Non-Judgmental
4. Harm Reduction
5. Trusting Youth-Adult Relationships
6. Strengths-Based
7. Positive Youth Development
9. Collaboration

All of these principles, as well as cultural responsiveness, are woven throughout this entire curriculum.

SWC's Three Primary Goals:

Goal 1. Serving Youth: Provide high quality outreach to youth who have run away and/or youth at risk of, or currently experiencing, homelessness and/or exploitation. Fostering self-advocacy and self-sufficiency, SWC empowers youth to meet their own needs. Our primary purpose is to walk alongside young people, meeting them where they are and acknowledging and honoring their individual journeys.

Goal 2. Leading the Collaborative: Provide leadership, technical assistance, training and support to members and other youth-serving agencies by providing space for sharing, networking and collaboration. We define “collaboration” as a meaningful, valuable, action-oriented, mutually beneficial relationship that empowers us all to better serve young people than we could alone.

Goal 3. Impacting the Community: Engage members, partners, youth and the community to effectively steer public perception of the problem of homelessness and sexual exploitation and ensure that policy, funding opportunities and community strategies more accurately reflect the strengths and barriers of the youth we serve. By acting as a collaborative, our collective voice will reach more people with greater credibility.

Current SWC Structure:

- Functioning as a collaborative led by LSS staff - Director of Metro Homeless Youth Services, Senior Program Manager of StreetWorks, Senior Training Manager, Training Specialist and the StreetWorks Collaborative Administrators.
- The Collaborative consists of member agencies, collaborative partners, supporters, and the broader community.
- Guidance and oversight are provided by an advisory committee comprised of directors from member and partner agencies.
- Leadership and insight are provided by outreach workers, including peer outreach workers and peer interns and their supervisors through ongoing communication and monthly collaborative meetings.

Membership:

SWC has many diverse partners and members. Membership consists of working collaboratively to develop best practices, participating in various training opportunities, attending monthly informational meetings, and coordination of geographic outreach areas and schedules to ensure the most consistent services for youth. In some, but not all cases, SWC Members may also be sub-grantees of LSS. However, membership is open to all youth-serving agencies throughout the metro (and beyond). SWC membership is a model based on the desired level of engagement of SWC Members, Collaborative Partners and Supporters. Agencies choose their own level of engagement based on the criteria noted below and can move from one level to another as needed and appropriate.

The Member and Partner Agencies of StreetWorks currently include:

- Ain Dah Yung Center
- Avenues for Homeless Youth
- The Bridge for Youth
- Catholic Charities – Hope Street
- Pillsbury United Community-Full Cycle
- Face to Face - SafeZone
- Hope 4 Youth
- The Link - C.O.R.E. drop-in center
- Lutheran Social Service-Metro Homeless Youth Services
- MoveFwd
- Oasis for Youth
- Salvation Army’s Booth Brown House
- YMCA Youth Intervention Services
- YouthLink



STREETWORKS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Organizations and individuals that successfully support homeless youth take a principles-based approach to their work, rather than a rules-based approach. Principles provide guidance and direction to those working with homeless youth. They provide a framework for how we approach and view the youth, engage and interact with them, build relationship with them and support them.

The challenge for youth workers is to meet and connect with each young person where they are and build a supportive relationship from there. Principles provide the anchor for this relationship-building process. *[Source: 9 Evidenced-based Guiding Principles to Help Youth Overcome Homelessness, 2014]*

1. **Journey-Oriented:** Interact with youth to help them understand the interconnectedness of past, present, and future as they decide where they want to go and how to get there.
2. **Trauma-Informed:** Recognize that most homeless youth have experienced trauma; build relationships, responses, and services on that knowledge.
3. **Non-Judgmental:** Interact with youth without labeling or judging them on the basis of background, experiences, choices, or behaviors.
4. **Harm Reduction:** Contain the effects of risky behavior in the short-term and seek to reduce its effects in the long-term.
5. **Trusting Youth-Adult Relationships:** Build relationships by interacting with youth in an honest, dependable, authentic, caring, and supportive way.
6. **Strengths-Based:** Start with and build upon the skills, strengths, and positive characteristics of each youth.
7. **Positive Youth Development:** Provide opportunities for youth to build a sense of competency, usefulness, belonging, and power.
8. **Holistic:** Support youth in a manner that recognizes the interconnectedness of their mental, physical, spiritual, and social health.
9. **Collaboration:** Establish a principles-based, youth-focused system of support that integrates practices, procedures, and services within and across agencies, systems, and policies.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for this manual is professionals who are supervising street outreach and peer outreach workers/interns.

The intended audience of the certification curriculum is new and/or existing youth outreach workers, including peer outreach workers and interns and/or other professionals who work with vulnerable populations.

What is in the Supervisor Handbook?

This handbook is designed to give the supervisor insight into the outreach worker's unique role and instruction for the supervisor on how to provide support. The handbook introduces the StreetWorks Outreach Worker Training Curriculum, the material that workers will cover as part of their initial training and how to support them based on the topics covered during their certification process. The handbook addresses the organizational role in outreach, hiring practices, and best practices for outreach programs. Throughout the handbook there are also important tips on how to supervise peer outreach workers and/or interns.

PATH TO CERTIFICATION

The StreetWorks Outreach Worker Certification Training Curriculum is designed to bring trainees through five interactive and experiential stages of learning and development. Each stage builds the skills necessary to enter into the next stage leading up to certification. Each stage and its intended outcomes are listed below.

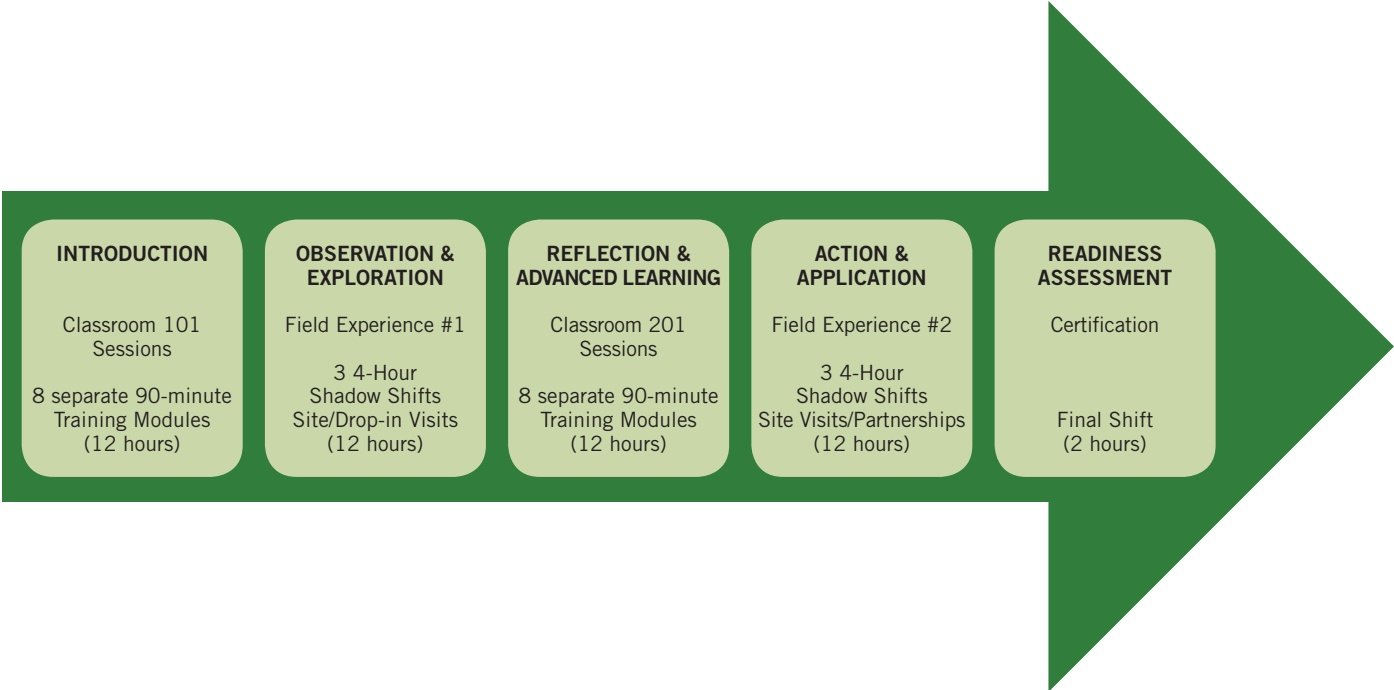
Stage 1: Introduction to Concepts, Classroom 101 Sessions. In Stage 1, trainees will learn about outreach work and the role they play in a community response to help at-risk, sexually exploited and homeless youth. They will gain foundational knowledge about how to engage with youth safely and effectively. This will give them the general concepts needed before they go into the field for their first observation/shadow shifts. There are eight separate 90-minute Classroom 101 sessions for a total of 12 hours.

Stage 2: Observation and Exploration, Field Experience #1. In Stage 2, trainees will observe the work of their seasoned outreach field trainer in their Field Experience #1 and will compare available community resources for a better understanding of where they might be referring youth. In Field Experience #1, trainees will schedule three shadow shifts with their outreach worker field trainer, of four hours each shift. They will also plan for at least six site visits (on their own, without their outreach trainer) to be scheduled before they move on to the next stage where they will reflect and learn from their past outreach experiences.

Stage 3: Reflection and Advanced Learning, Classroom 201 Sessions. In Stage 3, trainees will bring their journals and logbooks from their Field Experience #1 to Classroom 201 sessions and compare their experiences from the field with the concepts they learned in Classroom 101 sessions. They will also get a deeper, and more advanced understanding of the Classroom 101 modules. Through lecture, activities, case scenarios, and role playing they will be prepared for their more hands-on Field Experience #2. There are eight separate 90-minute Classroom 201 sessions for a total of 12 hours.

Stage 4: Action and Application, Field Experience #2. In Stage 4, trainees will take a more active role in their training. Rather than observing, the trainee will take the lead in their shadow shifts and will practice relationship building with community partners. In Field Experience #2, trainees will schedule three shadow shifts of four hours each, with their outreach worker field trainer, and will plan for at least six site visits to work on building relationships with community partners.

Stage 5: Readiness Assessment, Certification. In Stage 5, the trainee, SWC training facilitator, and trainee's supervisor meet to review the trainee's workbook assignments and journals. During this time, trainees receive feedback on their strengths and on the areas where they need further support. Following the meeting, the trainee, the training facilitator and their supervisor do a short outreach shift together to mark the final stage of certification. *It is important that the supervisor also participates in this final stage, to demonstrate the supervisor's involvement in the ongoing development of the outreach worker.



WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE STREETWORKS CERTIFICATION FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

In the Facilitator's Guide, you will find:

- Core Information: “What You Need to Know.” Content in this first section gives important researched-based information facilitators will need to know in order to facilitate the curriculum
- Detailed instructions and general information on how to facilitate both Classroom 101 and 201 sessions
- Classroom 101 and 201 training materials
- Appendix
- Youth Focus Group Report: “What Youth Say”
- Outreach Worker Field Trainer Handout
- StreetWorks Greater Minnesota Focus Group Summary: Youth Experts and Service Providers – Research for StreetWorks Training Curricula and Regional Training Needs in Greater Minnesota

Introduction to Youth Focus Group Report: “What Youth Say”

StreetWorks conducted a series of focus groups and interviews with sexually exploited youth to gain insight into their perceptions about street outreach, current trends in exploitation and knowledge about resources. Given the hidden nature of commercial sexual exploitation, it can be difficult to gain first-hand information, yet it is imperative to hear about experiences directly from youth to help understand key issues to improve programming and develop strategies for future outreach.

In addition, we intentionally sought out the participation of underserved and underrepresented populations. The report on these focus groups and interviews are provided in the Appendix and quotes from the youth are highlighted throughout the training guide. Thank you to Trudee Able-Peterson who facilitated these groups, and the courageous expert youth who participated in them, providing invaluable feedback to inform this work.

Introduction to the StreetWorks Greater Minnesota Focus Group Summary: Youth Experts and Service Providers – Research for StreetWorks Training Curricula and Regional Training Needs in Greater Minnesota

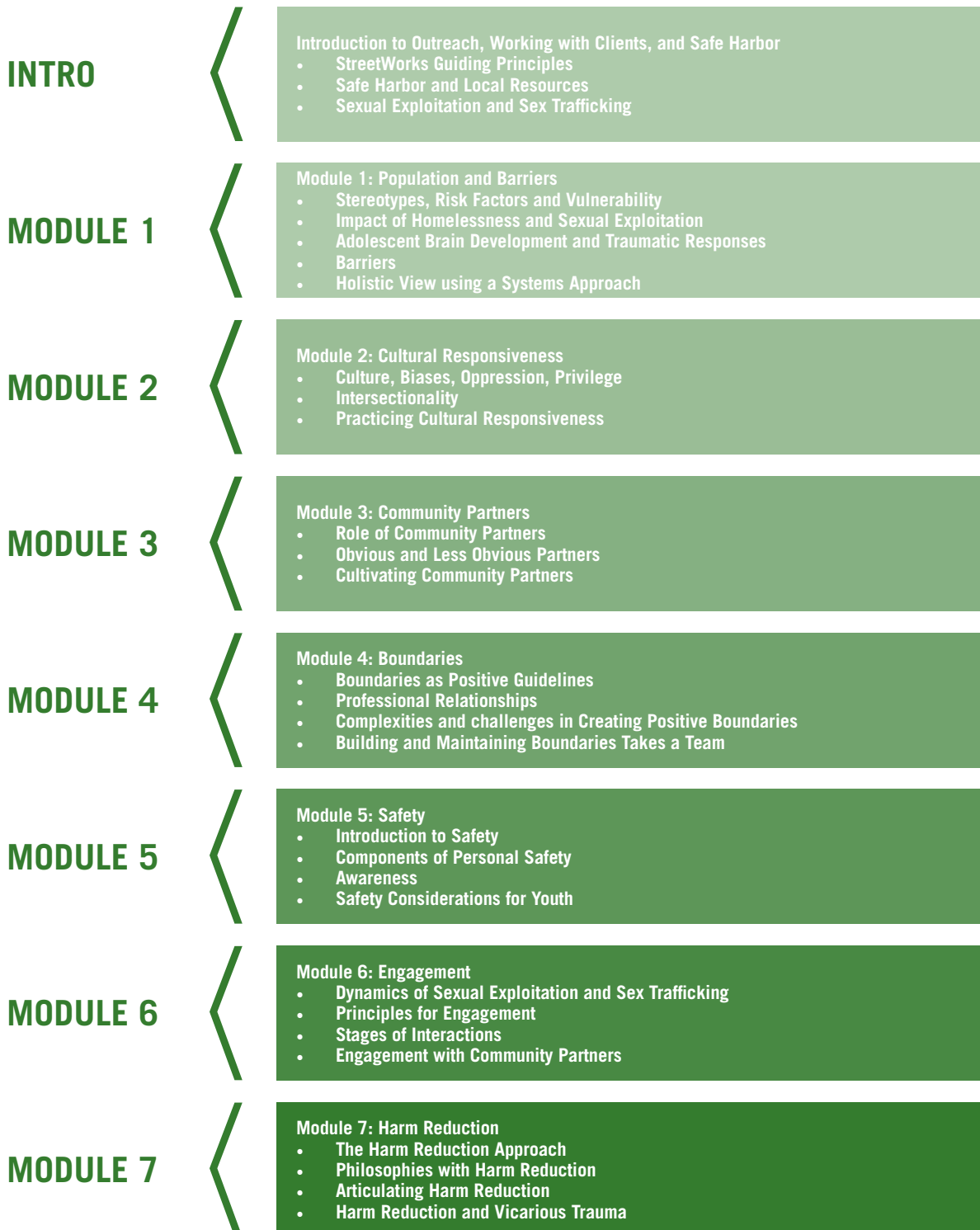
To expand support for youth experiencing homelessness in Minnesota, The StreetWorks Collaborative (StreetWorks), a Program of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, conducted focus groups at five sites in Greater Minnesota. The goal of these focus groups was to determine the needs of youth and youth workers in rural areas, and to gauge whether the StreetWorks Outreach Worker Curriculum designed for use in the Twin Cities could be adapted for use in Greater Minnesota. The focus group sites were Willmar, Duluth, Mankato, Brainerd, and Rochester, and took place between March and May of 2018.

The purpose of the research was to compare StreetWorks' knowledge of youth outreach in the Twin Cities area to the needs and resources available in Greater Minnesota. Based on the findings, there is a significant need in Greater Minnesota for an effective training process for providers and other professionals who encounter youth in their work.

StreetWorks currently provides training and technical assistance to StreetWorks Outreach Workers, community partners, and other youth-serving providers in the Twin Cities metro area and has modified its current curriculum to better serve Greater Minnesota.

FOUNDATIONAL MODULES OVERVIEW

The following graphic shows the topics that will be covered in the various Learning Modules. While the modules in Classroom 101 and 201 sessions are labeled the same, there is advanced information given in the 201 sessions. 201 sessions build off of information given in the 101 sessions as well as in the field experience learning. In Classroom 101 sessions, there is more teaching by the facilitator, whereas in 201 sessions, the trainees are learning more strategies and tools to think critically about implement their learning. The training topics are ordered in a specific way so certain points can be understood and highlighted in later modules.



StreetWorks Tool Kit

Introduction to Supervising Outreach Workers

INTRODUCTION TO SUPERVISING OUTREACH WORKERS

Overview of Outreach Work

Day-to-day outreach work can look different for different agencies, and for workers in different locations, but the role of outreach work remains the same. For example, in the Twin Cities metro area, youth are more likely to be on the streets, but in suburban and rural areas, you may be more likely to find youth in other places, such as community centers, libraries and schools. No matter where a youth is, both in location and in need, an outreach worker's role is to find the youth, and help increase individual opportunities by increasing access to and use of resources. A truly positive piece of outreach work is that outreach workers have the ability to meet the youth where they are the most comfortable, which is often outside of a formal agency or service provider.

The ultimate goal is to ensure the client is: *Safe, Stable, Healthy and Empowered.*

The Role of Outreach in Your Agency

No matter what services an agency provides for youth, adding outreach is an integral next step in the continuum of care for at-risk youth. Effective outreach is the point where youth can gain a connection to a caring and supportive adult without having to give something in return. An outreach worker, who builds a trusting relationship with a youth, is a bridge back to appropriate and safe services both within your agency and with community partners. Community partners can offer outreach worker's contact information to youth and can serve as a source of resources and services to which an outreach worker can refer youth.

Integrating outreach work into an agency is an important service to youth in the community. Agency support for outreach work should be both organizational, where the agency recognizes the importance of this unique and difficult work, and individual, ensuring supervisors are qualified to meet the needs of their outreach workers.

Expectations of StreetWorks Collaborative Member Agency Supervisors

Outreach workers are expected to attend monthly outreach worker meetings scheduled by the collaborative program manager. Agency supervisors are expected to attend every second monthly meeting with their worker(s). This is a critical commitment for success of their outreach program and the success of the collaborative.

For supervisors who do not have experience in outreach work, trainings are available upon request. An individual training can offer a better understanding of what outreach work is, the needs that outreach workers may have, and how to evaluate and measure the success and impact of their outreach worker/team. Trainings can include how to interview and choose the best candidates for outreach, and how to select peer outreach workers who can succeed and are ready for this unique work.

BEST PRACTICES FOR OUTREACH PROGRAMS INCORPORATING OUTREACH INTO YOUR AGENCY

Ensure the outreach worker's role is in line with agency policies and change any policies that might not allow appropriate outreach work to be done effectively.

- Example Problematic Policy: "No contact with a youth outside of agency facilities." The agency has to acknowledge that street outreach doesn't fit into this policy and adjust the policy to recognize that the outreach function is different and outreach staff will have contact with youth outside of the facility, when they are working.
- Example Problematic Policy: "No services to youth who have been restricted from the agency because of safety or behavior issues." For example, if a client has been restricted for safety reasons, the outreach worker and supervisor should consider if the outreach worker could provide services outside of the agency, basing the decision on whether the outreach worker can provide those services safely.

Consider dual responsibilities for outreach workers. Some agencies will assign outreach workers to provide both in-house case management services and off-site outreach work. This can allow the outreach worker to see the results of bringing youth from the street scene to service provision in case management.

Peer Considerations: This practice would not likely be utilized with young peer outreach workers. This can be satisfying to staff, but can also require a different set of skills, partners and perspectives to their work.

Having dual responsibilities for an outreach worker is only appropriate if the time scheduled for those roles is known well in advance of the expected shift times. For example, it is not best practice to have outreach workers serve as an emergency fill-in for on-site staff.

Outreach workers must not be pulled from outreach shifts to fill in when other staff are not able to make it to work. Doing so hurts outreach programs by impacting the outreach workers' consistency and reputation on the street. It is particularly problematic for outreach workers who work with partners. When an outreach worker must cancel a partnered shift, this not only affects your program credibility, but the work of another outreach worker agency as well.

Consider how you will structure your in-service training, work, and supervision. Decide what percentage of time should be spent on:

- Ongoing training
- Supervision
- Interagency team building
- Planning
- Documentation of work
- Site work
- Street work

Schedule adequate supervision time. Agency supervisors must make enough time in their schedules, on a regular basis, to adequately supervise the outreach workers both in-house and on the street.

Ensure fair and reasonable compensation. Outreach positions can be difficult to categorize because they often don't have a comparable position in the agency, or in the community, with which to compare salaries and job descriptions. However, outreach is a professional field, thus it is important that supervisors ensure that the worker is paid a fair starting

salary and that salary increases are based on performance evaluations that account for their specific and unique job responsibilities. Also consider that because of the nature of the work, it is not always best practice to have this be an entry level position, but one for an experienced worker.

Integrate outreach role into the agency. Supervisors should actively attempt to integrate their outreach program into the larger agency. It is important to ensure that the worker does not become isolated from colleagues simply because of the nature of street outreach work. When the agency has all-staff meetings, make sure to regularly feature the outreach workers and their contribution to the agency. Give the workers opportunities to tell staff from other departments/programs about their work. This gives their co-workers an understanding of outreach work, ensures that they can better support the worker, and reminds staff of the unique contributions that the outreach worker makes to the agency.

Updates and news about collaborative efforts should also be brought back to board members and other leaders of the organization. This helps to ensure outreach work is appreciated, understood, and being implemented into future planning for the organization. Regular, annual or biannual evaluations of the outreach program will help the agency determine and document successes and challenges. This provides an opportunity to improve services, helps with organizational planning, and gives workers valuable feedback about their work.

Ensure the agency believes outreach work is valuable to the organization and to the community. Outreach workers need to know they are valued and are part of a team effort.

****It is important for the worker to meet their supervisor's supervisor. The agency leader should welcome the outreach worker/s to the agency and let them know they support the outreach efforts. In larger organizations, it is less likely to happen, but it can be very effective in making the outreach team members feel welcomed and valued.***



Module 1

The Outreach Worker

MODULE 1: THE OUTREACH WORKER

Before Training Begins

Hire Well-Suited Outreach Workers

Outreach workers will be in their work sites without supervision, so it is critical you are hiring competent, ethical people to do this work. Outreach work requires critical thinking, creative problem solving and the ability to work independently. It is important to get to the core of a potential outreach worker's character, beliefs and integrity when interviewing for an outreach position.

During the interview process, it is extremely beneficial to utilize real-life examples that are typical of interactions and situations outreach workers will encounter in their work. Give the scenarios and then ask candidates, "How do you think you would respond in these situations?" You aren't necessarily looking for perfect answers; instead, you are looking to get a sense of the person's innate qualities and sense of boundaries. Using this approach also helps you to discover how much additional or on-going training the candidate would require.

Some sample questions for interviewing candidates are given below. When using this strategy to gauge a worker's fit for this position, interviewers should be prepared to ask the candidate for multiple strategies and approaches to the same situation, saying something like, "Let's say plan A doesn't work, what would be your plan B?" Outreach workers need to demonstrate the ability to problem solve, think critically and be creative, and these abilities are often displayed when their first approach doesn't work. If a potential candidate answers these questions with "I don't know, I'd ask my partner who has more experience, or "I'd ask my supervisor as soon as I can," it is an indication that the candidate is open and willing to learn the best actions and responses.

Example Questions

The following questions are designed to present situations where the appropriate response is going to be ambiguous or challenging. The goal is not to test whether or not a candidate knows the appropriate answer, but how they determine what that answer is.

Interviewers should focus as much if not more in the candidate's decision-making process than in the candidate's answer. Do they use critical thinking skills, consider different factors and options and understand potential outcomes? Do they ask questions about the situation presented before they answer? When their decisions are questioned, do they respond defensively or embrace input and direction?

1. An outreach team sees a couple fighting on the street. One member of the couple is getting badly beaten. What do you do? Does the candidate consider their own safety in the situation? Does the candidate consider the safety of either or the people involved in the fight, and do they consider that any intervention they do in this situation could make either of the people less safe than they already are. If a candidate proposes calling police, does the candidate recognize that police intervention may make the situation worse as well?

2. A youth discloses that his uncle had sex with him and asks if you think he's gay. How do you respond? There are two big points in this scenario, the abuse and the client's question about their identity. Does the candidate focus on one and not the other? Do they seem willing to address both issues? Do their responses reflect an understanding of the dynamics of abuse and exploitation? Do their responses demonstrate a respect for this individual's identity? How do they decide what to say to the youth? Do they consider how well they know youth or their previous interactions with this youth in their decisions?

3. A frightened youth asks an outreach worker to dispose of a gun for her. What happens next? Does the candidate understand both the legal, safety and ethical implications of the situation? Do they consider the youth's concerns in this situation or only their own? Do they consider different options or suggest ways they can help the youth without taking the gun themselves?

4. A youth asks an outreach worker, "Try this condom on with me." How do you respond? Youth have a number of different ways to challenge the worker's boundaries, some more innocuous than others, but in a situation like this, can the candidate recognize the balance between maintaining a relationship and boundaries that are safe and respectful with the client and the worker while, at the same time, attempting to be strength-based and non-judgmental.

5. You have an appointment to meet a youth in a park to take them to get an ID, but this is the second time the youth doesn't show up. The third time, upon showing up, you realize the youth is high. It's a Friday and the youth needs the ID for a job that starts on Monday and wants help to go get it. What do you do? Note any judgments of the client's behavior that the candidate demonstrates (such as, if they were ready for a job, they'd show up to the appointments or they wouldn't be high). Does the candidate view this situation as an opportunity?

6. A police officer is threatening and harassing a youth you know. What do you do? Does the candidate recognize multiple factors in this situation? Do they recognize that intervening directly could potentially help but also potentially make the situation worse?

7. You see a youth negotiating with a "customer" for sex. What do you do? Does the candidate recognize their role in this situation? Do they elect to intervene immediately or assume the youth wants the worker's intervention? Do they recognize the danger of intervening for themselves but also for the youth?

8. Your outreach partner wants to "call it a night" because it's very cold and there are no youth around. He says, "Let's just go home, and keep our phone on. No one will know." How do you respond? Does the candidate recognize the ethical problem in this situation? Do they address it directly with the worker in the scenario, or do they bring it to their supervisor or the worker's supervisor? Ask what they would do if the behavior continued either with them or another worker.

A few things to look for in a potential candidate:

- Is this someone who can gain the trust of youth?
- Is the candidate flexible? In work hours? In spontaneous changes in the work environment?
- Will the candidate be able to think quickly and/or stay calm in emergencies?
- How will the candidate deal with short-term failures/enjoy long-term results?
- Will the candidate be able work as a team member with partner, agency and the collaborative?
- Does the candidate have the potential confidence to act as an advocate for youth?
- Does the candidate have the ability and demeanor to work with medical, law enforcement, and community partners?
- Will the candidate represent the organization in a professional way?
- Does the candidate have the capacity and understanding of the importance of keeping accurate records?
- Does the candidate have strong ethics and professional boundaries?
- Is the candidate open to learning new things?
- Does the candidate have common sense and a sense of humor? (Sense of humor is needed in this work.)

Peer/Intern Considerations: Value of Peers and Interns

Peer outreach workers and peer interns are an important element in outreach programming. Because many of them have had life experiences that parallel the youth being served, they bring unique understanding and perspective to the work and valuable information from the ever-changing culture of youth to the program. Although it may take a little extra time and attention, peer outreach workers/interns can add depth and quality to programs. However, peers need to have opportunities to be heard. If a program only hires peers because the pay scale may be lower for young workers or to impress their board, it is unlikely to be effective. Show respect for peers and give them the training and supervision they deserve, and you could help create future social service staff who are deeply committed to homeless and at-risk youth.

Peer Considerations: Example Interview Questions When Hiring Peers

1. Tell us about yourself. Why does this (peer) outreach worker/intern position interest you?
2. What do you think the job of street outreach is?
3. What qualifications do you have that best suit you for this position?
4. Please describe your understanding of how youth become homeless and of the street culture in which they exist.
5. Talk about yourself as a role model.
6. Tell us about a work or school experience where you were part of a team and had to speak up and tell other people what you thought or felt.
7. Give us an example of a time when you were able to communicate successfully with a person who did not like you.
8. How would you talk with a youth who is questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity?
9. Tell us about a situation from a work or personal experience when people's emotions flared up and you helped calm down the crisis.
10. What activities have you done to educate yourself about other cultures?

11. Work as an outreach worker is a professional job where youth and the team are counting on you. What does it mean to you to be a professional?
12. What is confidentiality? Why is it important as a peer outreach worker?
13. Tell us about your knowledge and experience in HIV/STI/STD education and prevention.
14. Can you describe your understanding of Harm Reduction philosophy?

Situational questions:

15. A youth who you referred successfully into an independent living program invites you to his 21st birthday party. He “just has to invite you—you are the person that helped me get off the streets.” What is your response? *Does the candidate consider the boundary issues in attending a personal event put on by the youth? Do they consider the difference between attending the event on their personal time and their professional time?*

16. You have been doing regular outreach with a partner, Harry, for many months now. You see some of the same youth every time you are out and have developed a good rapport with many of them. One day, Harry is unable to do outreach, and you go to the regular spot with a different partner. One of the youth you regularly see begins to disclose to you the details of her intimate relationship with Harry. What do you do with this information? *When asking this question, the interviewer should not assume that a peer candidate will automatically understand how serious this situation is or what responses would be mandated by this situation. Does the candidate recognize that “Harry” is acting unethically and unsafely? Does the candidate see the youth in this scenario as a victim? Whether the candidate brings up reporting the situation or if this needs to be explained to the candidate, how does the candidate feel about reporting this situation? Does the candidate consider how reporting this information will affect the youth?*

17. You’ve been working for some time with a young woman who is being sexually exploited/trafficked. You haven’t seen her for a couple of weeks, and you’ve been concerned. You are out on an outreach shift and you see her across and down the street. She’s obviously working. What do you do? *Does the candidate consider whether it is safe for the worker or the youth to approach the youth? Does the candidate consider whether the youth wants to be approached by the worker?*

18. Johnny, a young man you know well from outreach, knows a lot about cars and fixes cars for friends and family. You’re having some problems with your battery or starter or alternator—but you aren’t sure which it is, and you don’t have the cash to take it into the garage for a diagnostic. Johnny offers to take a look at it. What is your response? *While the appropriate response should be to say no, if the candidate identifies this as an opportunity to do some strength-based relationship building, tell them “no,” but give them credit for the strength-based approach.*

Supporting Outreach Workers within the Agency

Introduce your agency to new employees. Be sure to spend some time orienting a new outreach worker to your agency, including the agency history, mission, goals and organizational structure. A few unique things to consider that outreach workers may need from other staff in your agency are listed below.

- Specific goals of outreach work and how those fit into the larger mission of the organization.
- Orientation to the community. The supervisor should be responsible for ensuring that the worker is introduced to partners in the community and is given a tour of the local geography.
- Current information about drugs (street names, results from ingestion, likely combinations of drugs being tried, etc.).
- Specific guidance on working with LGBTQ youth, and if there are any specific services or resources available for them.
- Other specific cultural services or resources that are available.
- Street vernacular (some terms to know are listed in the front of this manual).
*Note: Street vernacular can change rapidly and from area to area. Outreach workers should keep up with those changes. Youth are excellent resources for helping outreach workers keep up with new vernacular.
- First aid training/kits.

Provide clear expectations. In order for workers to be effective in their positions, and for agencies to integrate outreach work into their agencies, job descriptions must be clearly written and explained to the outreach worker. Explaining the job description includes providing workers with information about the goals, objectives and outcomes that are expected to be fulfilled, especially if there is a grant that supports their work.

It needs to be very clear to potential employees that outreach work is not a 9:00 to 5:00 job, and evening and/or weekend work is usually required. An exception might be if a worker was only hired to do school-based work. The variety in shift times should be explained up-front, so candidates are able to fully commit to the work.

Supervisors need to make it clear to potential employees that paperwork and documentation is involved in this position. They need to emphasize that grant funding comes with the condition that data and statistics will be collected and failing to collect the required data can jeopardize current and future funding for the outreach work.

Require preparation and debriefing time. It is very important for outreach workers to take the time to prepare with their outreach partners before their shift. (Workers will be learning about preparation and debriefing time during their certification training.)

- Before the shift, workers should have conversations about what work is happening on the shift, location, goals, review of any issues that occurred on their last shift, emergency contact info, cell phone number exchange and a safety word or phrase should be agreed upon.
- During the shift, supervisors, or someone qualified to help make important decisions, needs to be available by phone for every shift. Unexpected incidents can occur in street settings and workers may need in-the-moment support.

- After the shift, it is critical for workers to take time to discuss with each other what happened on that shift, whether it's been successful and if the shift met the goals, or if it was disappointing or felt dangerous in any way. While it is not necessary for supervisors to debrief every shift, they should ensure that the shift debrief is happening with other workers.
- Critical incidence debriefing. Every agency should have its own policies on critical incidents, including how they are reported and documented. Ensure that your worker knows and understands these policies and will follow them in the event of an incident.
- Provide formal and informal supervision.

Supervisors should schedule regular supervision time but have the option for a more informal open door policy so workers can get immediate feedback to help create supportive and healthy work relationships.

Peer Considerations:

Peer outreach workers/interns will need more frequent supervision and direction, both on the street and in-house, particularly in the first six months of their work. (More guidance for peer outreach workers below.)

Supervision for outreach workers needs to happen both in-house and on site. Site supervision will help to inform the supervisor about issues for their in-house supervision sessions and will allow workers to:

- Demonstrate what they have learned
- Show how they do their work and where they go on their shifts
- Demonstrate their relationship with community partners
- Show who the youth are that they are serving

* For supervisors without experience in outreach work, outreach shifts can be unfamiliar and sometimes even uncomfortable. Recognize that this is a fantastic chance to learn from employees who are the experts and can be incredibly empowering for the outreach worker to guide their supervisors.

Supervising an outreach worker when you have not actually practiced outreach work can be somewhat difficult. Outreach workers often confront barriers and challenges unique to their role, and supervisors may find themselves in situations where they may be unsure how to support the outreach worker. In order to effectively provide support, be sure you are consulting with other outreach supervisors and make use of monthly outreach worker meetings to help familiarize yourself with outreach best practices. Please be sure to reach out to the StreetWorks leadership team when needed.

**“GOOD SUPERVISORS ARE THE STEWARDS OF A PERSON’S CAREER. COMPETENT AND CARING STEWARDSHIP THAT INCLUDES OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH, ADVANCED LEARNING, ON-GOING SUPPORT AND SKILL ASSESSMENT FOR A WORKER IS CRITICAL.”
- TRUDEE ABLE-PETERSON**

Peer Considerations: Supervising Peer Outreach Workers/Interns

Definition of a Peer Outreach Worker in the StreetWorks Collaborative

- Typically, a youth between the ages of 17-25
- Often a youth who has experienced homelessness and has utilized services of collaborative member agencies, i.e. outreach services, drop-in services, housing referrals, educational referrals. (Because of their own life experiences, they bring unique insights to the work.)
- Has now stabilized enough to hold a job and be successful

When an outreach program is considering hiring a peer outreach worker, or peer intern, supervisors need to understand the amount of time and commitment that will be needed to ensure youth receive the necessary training and opportunities to become a successful part of the team. Supervisors must interview and screen youth carefully for the position.

Peers can be set up for failure if they take a position for which they are not ready. Peers must have the capacity to keep strong boundaries and be able to separate their friends and their work lives. Other barriers to success can include:

- Unstable housing
- Physical health issues
- Mental health issues
- Chemical use/addictions
- Lacking in social skills
- Other obligations

Obtaining a job as a peer outreach worker or intern may be the first employment a youth will experience. Acclimating to a first, or new, work environment is challenging for all people. A youth will need to understand what the commitment to the job entails and have clarity about job expectations.

Peers will have the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and learn professional skills and may be inspired to go back to school, get a higher degree and build a career in social service professions. Many peers or stakeholders of ten or twenty years ago are now the case managers, supervisors and program managers of today. When peers gain experience, they may often move up in the field if they choose not to go back to school. Supervisors who invest in these young workers are contributing to the larger community in important ways.

“BECOMING A PEER WAS THE BEE’S KNEES FOR ME. I WAS GETTING THE SAME CALLS AS A TEN-YEAR VETERAN OF OUTREACH. EVERYTHING WAS AWESOME; I FELT GOOD HELPING OTHER YOUTH TO NAVIGATE THINGS. I FELT PROUD TO GET A JOB AS A PEER TO ENTER THIS FIELD. IT OPENED UP SO MANY DOORS IN THIS FIELD WITHOUT HAVING A DEGREE AND GAVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE UP.”
- ZACHARY, FORMER PEER OUTREACH WORKER

Peer Considerations:

Professional Modeling

It is important that peer outreach workers and interns model a high degree of professional behavior at all times. This includes setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries with program participants and keeping confidentiality. It also means demonstrating work ethics, reliability and commitment. For peers to achieve these goals in their work, they need a clear understanding of their job description, agency expectations, and the goals and requirements of their position, including night and weekend work if required.

Relationships, Boundaries and Transitions

Boundaries with friends can be challenging for peers as there may be many potential gray areas when it comes to friends or even family members who need services. Even if they're not friends with a youth needing services, they may be a current or former classmate. It is also not unusual for a peer to have a relative who is seeking services. Just as with older outreach workers, family members and friends/acquaintances should be served by another outreach worker, or referred to another youth service agency, so that roles remain clear and the youth or family member still receives the services they need.

Transitioning

At this point in their lives, peers are in transition from youth to adult and from client/youth participant of a program to an employee. It is important that peers have guidance and support during this transition period.

Friends or family members may ask for favors like extra bus tokens or gift cards. Peers may be carrying a lot of supplies during outreach, and they have the capacity to provide badly needed resources. This gives the peer a status of power and friends may resent it when an outreach worker has to say no or refer them to another worker.

“MY FRIENDS ARE ALL MAD AT ME BECAUSE I CAN’T GIVE THEM ‘STUFF’ FROM THE OUTREACH BAG/SUPPLIES. THEY DON’T UNDERSTAND I’M WORKIN’ AND WHEN THEY SEE ME ON THE STREET, THEY THINK I’M JUST HANGIN’ OUT LIKE I USUALLY DO WITH THEM. THEY SAY, I’M THE MAN NOW AND DON’T TRUST ME.” - CASPER, FORMER PEER OUTREACH WORKER

It is important for a supervisor to steer the young worker through these challenges. Give them ideas of how to respond to friends who may be resentful of peers' new roles. They can do this work and not lose friends if they learn how to negotiate these situations. Let them know they can be firm and still respectful of friends. It's possible some friends won't understand, and they will be cut off from that relationship, at least for a time. Be supportive of these adult decisions that may need to be made.

“PEOPLE CAN BE OFF THE WALL. EVEN IF YOU’RE ON THE STREET, YOU CAN’T LET THE STREET COME OUT OF YOU.” - CAITLIN, FORMER OUTREACH WORKER

Peer Supervision Suggestions

1. Supervision should be weekly, for a one-on-one session for at least 45 minutes.
2. Supervision should occur on the street at least once a month for three months. Duration should be one to two hours at minimum.
3. Peers should not partner with inexperienced outreach workers for the first three months, including other peers (at the supervisor's discretion and judgment).
4. Evaluation should occur at least twice per year where peers receive feedback, review goals and outcomes, and focus on areas where more training is needed or desired.
5. Orientation for peers can be extended to include extra one-on-one training sessions focused on specific areas that the supervisor or the new worker decide is necessary. These extended sessions will revolve around:
 - Boundaries
 - Transitioning
 - Partnerships
 - Role on the team
 - Processing and problem solving
 - Feedback, advice, direction, guidance
 - Confidence, pride in their specialty
 - Range of approaches
 - Connections and relationships in the team

Professionalism/Realistic Expectations for Outreach Workers

Realistic Expectations of Self and Job

Setting realistic job expectations and making them clear from the beginning of an outreach worker's employment can help reduce stress, prevent frustration, self-doubt/uncertainty, and burnout of a job that often feels detached, uncertain, and unsupported.

New outreach workers and especially peer workers are often very excited to jump into their new roles and make an immediate difference. After all that hard work, time and energy spent in training and job shadowing, they want the impact of their work to be significant and feel rewarding. When they don't immediately see the impact of their work, workers often lose confidence, feel discouraged and start to second guess their career path. These feelings can happen not only when beginning outreach work but throughout their careers.

With outreach work, it can appear there may be a lack of progress or interest on the part of the youth in their (or our perceived) journey toward self-sufficiency and independence. Once relationships have developed and outreach workers experience more regular youth interactions, it will be important to revisit the need for patience and a focus on long-term outcomes when the day-to-day interactions become frustrating.

Supervisors need to constantly remind outreach workers that good outreach and meaningful impact can only happen through engagement and relationship building.

Both of these prerequisites take time, patience and persistence. It is important to have regular conversations about the purpose and focus of street outreach, including:

- Discussion around what defines a successful youth interaction or a successful shift.
- Recognizing the barriers that made them feel unsuccessful and developing new strategies.
- How to feel useful and/or productive when shifts are uneventful.
- Thinking about what the purpose of the shift is and why it matters.
- Reminders that this job requires time, consistency (geographical/sites and behavioral/ how you present to the world) and patience.

Realistic Expectations Around Paperwork and Documenting Outcomes

Most agencies are required by their agency and funders to quantify the success or impact of the services they provide. It is very common for outreach workers to overlook or even reject the importance and necessity to complete paperwork that capture these agency outcomes. There is often such a strong culture around and focus on building relationships in a non-clinical way, that paperwork and filling out forms may be seen as a detriment to the job of an outreach worker.

The skills and abilities that outreach workers use to build relationships and create strategies do not always line up with the type of data outreach workers are asked to track. Their data tracking does not readily show the work they have done or the outcomes that stem from their work. This is a very real challenge for all workers and programs, but the nature of outreach exacerbates this issue.

Acknowledging this with outreach workers and working together to come up with solutions that work for all parties involved is important and can alleviate a lot of stress, pressure and misunderstanding. It is easy for outreach workers to want to reject or fight against paperwork requirements and see next level leadership and funders as out of touch, unrealistic, uninformed. There can become an us-against-them mentality, and it is easy for outreach workers to believe that people back in their office or in the boardroom can't possibly understand their reality as a worker on the streets.

Outreach workers who are trained to grapple with broken systems, forced to game systems, find side doors to services, or even break rules at times, may want to push back and reject unrealistic professional requirements of the job. If the outreach worker sees paperwork as getting in the way of the outreach worker's primary goal of working with the client, it is not surprising that outreach workers resist paperwork. Supervisors who cannot empathize with this dynamic, are unlikely to be able to communicate effectively with the outreach worker on this subject and could find themselves in a power struggle.

In order to bridge this gap, it is the supervisor's role to talk about paperwork and outcome/data collection in a way that reassures the outreach worker that the agency and its funders typically have good intentions, even when the agency or the funder's perception of the work don't always match up with the realities of the work. Funders and supporters of outreach truly believe in its positive impacts and want to see their funding being used for something that makes a difference in the lives of the youth we work with. They want outreach to succeed. They are with us, not against us.

It is the responsibility of an agency's leadership (including supervisors) to make sure the outcomes and numbers funders want to see are realistic and achievable. When funder and agency goals and outcomes do not completely align with outreach happening on the street, it is the job of the supervisor to work creatively and strategically with the outreach worker to get the outcomes requested, or to advocate for more realistic outcomes based on their professional experience and expertise.

Module 2

Cultural Responsiveness

MODULE 2: CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Biases

Everyone has biases. Everyone. The rookie outreach worker, the veteran outreach worker, and the supervisor all have biases. As a supervisor, consider how ready you are to identify and address your own biases before you plan to sit down and work with the outreach worker around theirs. If you are going to ask an employee to do the necessary work to implement cultural responsiveness in their work, you must be ready to model the same humility and accountability.

Outreach workers who are trained by StreetWorks are trained to identify their own biases and judgments so that they can work to ensure that those biases and judgments don't determine the actions they take with clients. They are coached to work with their supervisor and their teammates to help them identify those biases that might be unconscious or may be validated by an overriding culture of privilege and marginalization.

Identifying biases, particularly unconscious biases that may have negatively influenced actions that they have taken in the past, can be a painful and humbling process to acknowledge. Workers navigating this process require support, encouragement and validation. Supervisors are more likely to be able to help the worker during this process once they have developed a trusting relationship with the worker.

Workers need to be reminded that identifying and addressing biases doesn't necessarily mean eliminating those biases. The awareness of biases allows the worker to recognize when those biases could affect their judgment, their words and their actions, and then the worker can compensate for their potential negative influence.

Supervisors have to be careful not to shame the outreach worker for possessing biases, as this will encourage them to deny, ignore and even justify those biases. Supervisors who are humble enough to talk about their own biases, how they identified them and how they compensate for them are more likely to be able to help the outreach worker do the same.

Micro vs. Macro Outreach

Street outreach is very focused on meeting young people where they are at and connecting them to resources and opportunities that will increase their level of self-sustainability as they work to overcome barriers to independence. As outreach workers become aware of and educated on the realities of why people experience homelessness and the historical systems of oppression and generational poverty underlying the homeless experience, they may become inspired to focus on the larger systems that perpetuate poverty and homelessness and take this on as part of their work.

Depending on your agency, and the focus of the services provided, there may be opportunities for outreach workers to participate in political processes, community protests, and other ways to advocate for social justice. As a supervisor, it is important to be clear about the expectations around the amount of time an outreach worker focuses on this more macro level of outreach work. It is also important to establish clear boundaries around the time and place these activities can and should occur.

When on the street with a partner doing outreach, a supervisor should encourage the outreach worker to focus on the micro impacts of relationship building and providing resources for individual youth in a way that diminishes any potential harm to all parties. Arguing with police, confronting a pimp, or challenging a racist business owner in an attempt to achieve social justice might actually make things worse and potentially dangerous for outreach workers and/or the youth they are advocating for.

If your outreach worker has a strong desire to make social change on a macro level, and if it's appropriate, make space for them to engage in ways that are safe, legal and organized and supports both professional and individual growth. If opportunities to engage in social justice reform are limited or non-existent in your agency, be clear about this and talk to outreach workers about ways they can pursue this passion outside of work and bring back what they learn to the agency and the youth they work with.

Module 3

Community Partners

MODULE 3: COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Working in a Collaborative

Peer Considerations

Peer outreach workers/interns will not only represent their own individual agency, but also several other agencies when working in a collaborative. It is important for peer outreach workers/interns to get to know those agencies, their missions, goals and purposes. All new outreach workers, including peers, who are trained through StreetWorks learn about the agencies they will refer to by visiting the agencies during the training process.

Peer outreach workers/interns who are a part of the StreetWorks collaborative will also be required to attend the monthly collaborative team meetings, which is an excellent forum for meeting the diverse group of outreach workers and their supervisors. These important meetings give outreach workers time to schedule their monthly shifts and attend critical ongoing training to build their skills. Supervisors must make sure these meetings are built into the new worker's schedule.

As part of the StreetWorks Collaborative, supervisors also attend six of these meetings annually (every other month). It is important for supervisors to get to know collaborative team members, StreetWorks staff, other supervisors, and team members. Often a peer outreach worker will need assistance from a supervisor when scheduling shadow training shifts. If the supervisor knows the other team members, it helps when arranging these shifts to know what skills the other team members can teach the new peer worker. Supervisors are an important key in assisting peers in navigating the collaborative.

Professionalism within Street Outreach Culture

Physical Appearance

Many businesses and agencies have expectations around an employee's physical appearance and dress because the worker is representing the business or agency by how they present themselves while doing their work. Supervisors should consider that the outreach worker's professional setting is often very different from other workers, and the expectations around professional presentation should reflect this.

An outreach worker should be mindful of their physical presence, knowing this presentation could potentially offend or mislead the client with whom they are working. In general, outreach workers should dress in a way that allows them to blend, be relatable and also feel comfortable depending on the weather and amount of physical activity they will be doing on a shift. Outreach workers should also be mindful not to wear clothing or accessories that reflect wealth and privilege in order to avoid prejudgments and the potential to become a victim of someone who wants what they have.

Aside from what outreach workers wear, how they choose to represent themselves through their physical appearance (hair, piercings, tattoos) may not be considered professional in other fields of employment, but are perfectly acceptable and may even give them credibility and an advantage when connecting with young folks and people on the street.

Attendance and Punctuality

The nature of street outreach allows for flexible scheduling that can be inconsistent from week to week with little to no oversight from, or accountability to, the outreach worker's home agency. The outreach worker is accountable to their partner, the community and ultimately to the young people they serve. However, none of these entities have any direct influence or control over their employment and professional development. This culture allows for a relaxed approach, and this is often interpreted as unprofessional behavior and patterns in regard to attendance and punctuality. There is no clock to punch, and no supervisors or peers to witness when an outreach worker begins or ends their shift or what they spend their time doing during a shift. At the end of the day an outreach worker's performance in these areas come down to honesty, integrity, pride, focus and a sense that the work they're doing matters and has impact.

Working within a collaborative and engaging directly with the community can be a blessing or a curse when it comes to an outreach worker's professional reputation and future job opportunities. An outreach worker who is not reliable or has poor boundaries will very quickly earn that reputation with their outreach peers, youth on the street and partner agencies. As a result, other outreach workers will not partner with them, youth will not engage with them, and partner agencies will not hire them in the future.

However, the opposite is also true. An outreach worker who proves to be reliable, dependable and trustworthy will attract outreach partners of the same caliber, youth will trust them and engage with them and partner agencies will ultimately provide opportunities for growth and increased pay.

Talking about this reality with your new outreach worker from the beginning can often inspire them to do better work for your program/agency knowing it could result in opportunities to develop and advance their career.

While holding outreach workers accountable in this area can be challenging, there are things you can do as a supervisor to remind your outreach worker that you care and that you are paying attention.

1. Schedule regular shadow shifts so you can have time on the street to build the relationship and witness their work.
2. Call their outreach phone when they are on shift to check in. Ask where they are and how things are going.
3. Call them mid-shift and ask if you can join for a bit.
4. Check in with them about youth they are working with. Do case consultations with them regarding their clients and ask questions, showing interest in their work.
5. Communicate with the supervisors of their partners to get insight on how things are going according to the people they are partnering with.
6. Communicate with community sites and agencies where your outreach worker spends time. Ask them how things are going and ask for feedback on the presence of the outreach worker at their site.
7. If given the opportunity, check in with young people who are receiving services or support from the outreach worker and ask how things are going and if they are getting what they need from that relationship.

In short, the more regular communication you can have with your outreach/peer worker and the people they have the most contact with, the more it will help alleviate feelings of isolation and will increase professional accountability. Doing this in a natural and tactful way that doesn't come across as spying or snooping and being transparent about why you are following up with them, is crucial.

If attendance and timeliness become an issue, a performance improvement plan (PIP) may be necessary. A PIP that focuses on improving performance by showing up rather than being punished for not showing up tends to be more inspirational. For example, instead of three strikes you're out, try having your outreach worker agree to arriving on time for every shift for a predetermined amount of time (week, month, etc.). This will encourage them to prove the value of their employment through their actions (showing up) or at least encourage clear communication when they are unable to show up, or to show up on time.

Sharing Knowledge and Expertise

The beauty of an outreach collaborative is that no single outreach worker is required to be an expert on every resource or on every opportunity available to young people experiencing homelessness. Outreach workers should be required to engage in constant networking with other youth work professionals, other outreach workers, and community members who are experts in different fields and with whom they can refer youth to. Supervisors can also check in with those same professionals and community members to see how the outreach worker is doing.

One of the best ways for this exchange to take place is at Outreach Worker and Full Collaborative meetings which are built in to the structure of the StreetWorks Collaborative. All too often, outreach workers appear to not have much to say or share at these meetings. Encouraging your outreach worker to share their experience, knowledge, and struggles around outreach will only serve to strengthen the collaborative and create more impactful outreach workers.

Working in Partnership

Collaborative style street outreach is a job where employees have the freedom and flexibility to control not only their schedule but also who they partner with. It is helpful to support outreach workers through this process. Choosing the right outreach partners can be a bit like dating. Outreach workers are professionally attracted to each other for a variety of different reasons. When first getting started, choosing a partner is based on first impressions at meetings, geographic or community preference, general connectedness, and ultimately schedule availability.

First shifts, like first dates, are about getting to know the other person, building trust and figuring out how to do your best work together as a team. As an outreach team spends time together on the street, in various situations interacting with youth and community members, the professional connections have the potential to grow and be amazing or feel frustrating, annoying and even dangerous. Ideally, outreach partners hold each other accountable. Scheduling dependability and timeliness, clear and healthy boundaries with youth, safety, shift productivity and paperwork etc. all depend on the professionalism of

an outreach worker and their partner. Poor performance of one outreach worker ultimately affects their partner's ability to do their job and impacts their professional reputation among youth, other outreach workers, the StreetWorks Collaborative and their agency.

As a supervisor, being in touch with who the outreach worker is partnering with, checking in regularly about how that partnership is going, and communicating regularly with their partners' supervisor can be helpful in supporting your outreach worker and preventing miscommunications or misunderstandings regarding accountability and job performance down the line.

Module 4

Boundaries

MODULE 4: BOUNDARIES

Building and Maintaining Boundaries Takes a Team

Boundaries require a team effort, involving the client, co-workers and positive oversight. Topics to consider around team efforts are appropriate roles, accountability, supervision, and self-care/burnout.

One of the issues that come up for outreach workers who work on the streets, is that they don't have an agency setting to help guide their relationships. For example, if the outreach worker only sees the youth at a drop-in center or at a shelter, it is easier to maintain boundaries because the agency provides certain expectations for youth and for the worker. Outreach workers who work on the streets don't have this type of setting to help reinforce and identify those boundaries. Without the automatic reinforcement of the setting, the responsibility to make and maintain boundaries is placed more heavily on the outreach worker.

Accountability

A client needs to know that their worker is being held accountable for following the rules through their agency, which creates a safe environment for the youth. A client should know that workers talk through situations with their team and supervisors. Explaining that workers need oversight, and need to be able to talk through decisions before making them, models good decision making and shows youth that the worker is being held accountable. It also shows youth that when workers have others they can consult with, there is back-up for both of them if a tough situation arises.

Appropriate Roles

Agencies should have clear roles documented so professionals in the agency understand their role in a client's life. A worker should be able to clearly articulate roles and expectations to the youth and use this defined role to help make daily decisions.

It needs to be clear to workers that it is not their role to be available to a client at any given moment. Instead, it is important to create a safety net of other professionals and other resources around the client, so they have many options and outlets they can turn to in a time of need.

A client should also know that they have the option of going to others in your agency to obtain help if their worker is not available, or if they simply want to work with someone else. It should be clear to both worker and client that it is a professional relationship and not a friendship and it is okay if the youth would rather work with someone else.

Boundaries and Supervision

It is critical for workers to use their supervisor, professional colleagues, and/or a mental health professional as a sounding board when questions or concerns regarding boundaries come up. It is especially important when boundary issues are impacting a worker's ability to provide objective, compassionate care.

Remembering that the focus of the client/worker relationship is on the needs of the client and not the worker is always important, but it does not mean that a worker's needs are unimportant. Supervisors should reinforce the idea that workers need to be sure their personal needs are being met in other ways, outside of their relationship with clients. Some of these needs can be met within the agency, with co-workers, or with supervisors.

Boundaries and Burnout

Studies have shown that ethical misconduct and boundary violations related to client provision is evident in those who are reporting burnout. A worker is less vulnerable to crossing boundaries if they are self-aware and engaged in constant self-care strategies.

Self-care also enables outreach workers to care for their clients in a sustainable way with greater compassion, sensitivity, effectiveness, and empathy. Dimensions of self-care should include: physical, social, emotional/mental, creative, spiritual/mindfulness. Ethically, it is imperative to have a working self-care plan in place.

Tips for Outreach Workers

Following are a few helpful tips for outreach workers:

- Consult with supervisor or professional colleagues if you are feeling uncomfortable about talking with your clients about boundaries or are unsure about where a boundary should be set.
- Talk about boundaries during your next team meeting, and make it a part of regular professional development.
- Check in about boundary issues and topics each time you meet with your supervisor.
- Avoid getting defensive—strive for team communication around boundaries that is open, honest, calm, and respectful.
- Consider it part of your job description to discuss definitions of roles with your supervisor.

Peer Worker Considerations: Peer Workers and Boundaries in Relationships

All new outreach workers in the StreetWorks Collaborative will be trained on boundaries and ethics as well as outreach methodology, but it is necessary to highlight a few specific points for issues surrounding peer boundaries.

StreetWorks peers cannot date youth who are program participants of any of the collaborative agencies or any other clients. When a youth accepts a job with an outreach program or StreetWorks Admin, it's important for them to disclose any dating relationships in which the peer is involved. If a new peer is in an intimate relationship with a youth who is receiving services, it's important the supervisor is informed, so alternative team services can be arranged for the significant other. Beginning a relationship with a new youth who a peer meets on the street, or flirting while working, is unacceptable. Set policies for peers, as with all outreach staff, regarding not dating clients and make certain they understand them when they take the position.

There can be gray areas in outreach work around relationships and other issues. When you work in an agency and are doing drop-in or shelter work, there is usually a supervisor on hand, and clear policies or rules hanging on the wall. When you're on the streets with your partner, the supervisor isn't there, which is why it's critical for supervisors to focus on helping the peer learn boundaries and feel comfortable enough to ask for help.

“I HAD A LOT OF CLOSE SUPERVISION IN THE BEGINNING AND REALLY NEEDED THAT. MY SUPERVISOR ALSO ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED ME IN GOING TO TRAININGS AND THAT HELPED ME SO MUCH.” - HOLLY, FORMER PEER OUTREACH WORKER

Supervision and Support

Weekly supervision for a new peer is critical and it's important for a peer to always have access to a supervisor. When supervisors take time off, a back-up supervisor must be in place for advice, guidance and in case of emergencies. For example, a peer may meet a youth who discloses they're feeling suicidal, escaping an abusive relationship or have been sexually assaulted, and these issues will be difficult to address for any worker who is new to this field.

**“WHEN I STARTED, I HAD A YOUTH WHOSE FAMILY WAS INVOLVED IN THE SEX TRADE. THEY HAD FOUR CHILDREN, THE YOUNGEST ONLY NINE AND ALL THE CHILDREN HAD BEEN SOLD INTO PROSTITUTION. THAT WAS OVERWHELMING AND I WAS LUCKY THAT I HAD A GOOD SUPERVISOR AND WE COULD TALK ABOUT ANYTHING.”
- JASMYN, FORMER PEER OUTREACH WORKER**

Include peers in regular team meetings as much as possible, to help them feel respected and a part of the team.

Outreach workers and supervisors who are training peers need to make the peers' role clear to the community they're serving. Peers can be mistaken for youth program participants when working in certain arenas, such as schools or youth service organizations. When peers are in training, they must always be identified as an outreach worker by veteran outreach workers. When a peer worker has received services with youth organizations or is still receiving services, such as residing in a Transitional Living Program, the lines can be blurred. Supervisors can assist peers in keeping those lines clear.

**“LIVING IN A TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM WHEN I STARTED AS A PEER HAD SOME BARRIERS, BUT CAN ALSO BE HELPFUL AS I WAS ABLE TO BETTER CONNECT WITH YOUTH. I COULD ALSO PROVIDE STEWARDSHIP FOR A YOUTH WHO NEEDED TO GET INTO PROGRAMS. BECOMING A PEER WAS VERY REWARDING AND EMPOWERING FOR ME. I FELT GOOD BEING A YOUNG WOMAN DOING THE SAME JOB AS OLDER PEOPLE.”
- JASMYN, FORMER OUTREACH WORKER**

Module 5

Safety

MODULE 5: SAFETY

As a supervisor, one of the most important ways you can support the outreach worker is to provide them with knowledge, guidance and tools to keep them and the youth they serve safe.

Peer Worker Considerations

When supervising a peer, safety is extremely important as they begin to explore a new career with new skill sets. Peers and individuals entering this field can easily get discouraged and give up if they do not feel safe while doing the job they were hired to do.

On the streets and out in the world it is easy to feel much more out of control of our circumstances than we do in our homes and workplaces. Combine this feeling with being in an unfamiliar environment where your job is to approach and engage young people who have largely been ignored and negatively stereotyped by society, and have no good reason to trust you or want to engage with you. Outreach work often takes place in neighborhoods and communities that are struggling financially with residents that are often not getting their basic needs met and have little to no support systems.

These conditions often result in individuals who are desperate to get what they need which often leads to an alternative street economy in which a person's values, health and safety are compromised to get what they need. These realities can make outreach feel scary, unpredictable and overwhelming for new outreach workers.

A supervisor should be talking about the realities of life on the street and prepare outreach workers for when a scene becomes unsafe or an interaction becomes awkward, or even confrontational. Supervisors also need to be available to talk through and process challenging interactions or experiences on the street which will undoubtedly happen. A lot of this preparation can and should take place before an outreach shift even begins.

Agency Preparation

There are a number of ways that a worker and their team safely prepare for outreach work before they even leave their agency site.

Schedules: The outreach worker, their supervisor, and their team should be clear about work plans and schedules and how that information will be communicated between the supervisor and other team members. Schedules should be shared with the worker's supervisor at the very least. Many agencies use online schedules that can sync with a worker's smartphone that allows the worker to not only share this information easily and quickly, but allows the worker to adjust the schedule remotely to keep a supervisor updated when things change. If these online schedules are not used, the worker and supervisor should agree on a system that allows the two of them to stay updated on the worker's schedule. Tying in the ideas around boundaries, the outreach worker is safer if the supervisor knows where they are.

Outreach workers must carry a working cell phone whenever they are working outside of their agency. Each agency should have a plan for who that outreach worker should contact in the event of an emergency. In some cases, this is the outreach worker's supervisor, in others, this is a system of on-call responses.

Preparation also includes deciding on whether a location is safe to go alone, or if the worker should only go to the planned location with a partner. Whether a worker goes to a site alone or with a partner, the site should be approved by agency supervisors.

The following are practices that should be instilled from day one and become an expected part of every shift:

- Know yourself:
 - Be confident and purposeful on the street (own it). Act like you know where you are and what you're doing.
 - Be genuine. Don't change who you are or appropriate culture to fit in and seem relatable. You may not be relatable and that's ok. Being relatable does not always mean being helpful.
- Use your skills, but listen to your gut. We use our professional knowledge, training and best practices to keep us safe, but ultimately every person is wired with survival instincts. Listen to your gut.
- Be aware of your biases and know your limits.
- Know your partner:
 - Before you set foot on the street, take time with a new partner to get to know them and their agency.
 - Talk about where you want to go, the connection to that area, and the impact you hope to have.
 - Exchange emergency contact information.
 - Check in about health related concerns (mental and physical) that may come up on shift. For example, diabetes/insulin or anxiety and what you need to get through those times when your health may interfere with your work. It may be as simple as your body's ability to walk, sit or stand for periods of time.
 - Communicate what your mood is that day and what you are up for so your partner can potentially balance you out.
 - Establish a consistent safety code word, phrase or behavior that allows to communicate when things are going poorly or feel unsafe.
 - Talk about how you keep yourself safe and if that involves carrying a weapon. If you or your partner does carry a weapon talk about when that would become a factor in an interaction and whether that makes you feel unsafe.
 - Are you and your partner prepared for the shift (phones, necessary supplies, proper clothing etc.)?
- Know your surroundings:
 - Where are you? Who lives here? What happens here? How connected are you?
 - Respect the space for what it is, without judgement.
 - Be aware of people, places, things and behaviors in the environment.
 - Who's got your back? Know the safe spaces and safe people nearby.
 - Who knows what's up? Business owners, police, people on the street? Check in with these people to get the vibe of the day, week, month, etc. Where are people at? What are they doing? Is there drama, or something to be aware of?
 - What is the lay of the land (where to find youth, escape routes, places to avoid, when to announce your presence, public transportation)?

Holding outreach workers to the above expectations will better prepare them for a safe and productive shift. Throughout the outreach worker's time with your agency, supervisors should also be providing opportunities for trainings around de-escalation, first aid, CPR, mental health, substance abuse, the cycle of physical and mental abuse, trauma informed care, etc. Any amount of education and exposure to the barriers and realities of life without stable housing will only increase the abilities of the outreach worker to feel more confident and ultimately safer on the street.

Having good/clear boundaries and ethics will also increase the safety of the outreach worker and the youth they work with.

Processing/debriefing shifts and critical incidents:

Inevitably, the outreach/peer will experience one or all of the following during their employment:

- Uncertainty or regret about how they handled a situation or interaction with a young person, co-worker or community member.
- Feeling directly threatened or generally unsafe on a shift.
- Feeling frustrated with agency and/or collaborative, "the man," expectations and rules.
- Emotionally complex and confusing relationships with youth from having favorites to being physically attracted and even falling in love.
- Feelings of grief that come with failure or loss. For example, losing contact with a vulnerable youth, youth exiting a program or service on negative terms, imprisonment, even death.
- Unreliable partners and scheduling.
- Loyalty/narking.

As your outreach worker experiences these potential challenges and traumas it will be important as their supervisor to guide them through, help them heal, and plan for next steps and proactive strategies for anticipating, avoiding or dealing with future challenges. Keep in mind, everyone has their own personality characteristics and life experiences that enable them to handle situations differently. What may be a challenge to one person may be experienced as a traumatic event by another. Each outreach worker/peer will need something different in the way of support and guidance from you as a supervisor.

Ideally, when an outreach worker is seeking support, the professional expectation would be to go to their direct supervisor. The reality is that not all supervisors have the same availability, connection, understanding and passion for outreach and their outreach workers. Knowing this to be true, the StreetWorks Collaborative can play an extremely important role in supporting outreach workers and the challenges they will face with this type of work.

While supervisors should always do their best to be available and support their employees, they should also encourage outreach workers to use other outreach workers, StreetWorks staff and collaborative members as a larger, more diverse, support system. The collaborative provides a wealth of knowledge, experience and diversity that allows for outreach workers to connect with experienced professionals outside of their own agency for guidance, support and connection.

If true collaboration is to happen, collaborative members providing support and assistance would encourage that outreach worker to eventually bring it back to their agency supervisor and potentially even help make that connection or bridge any possible gaps in communication.

In some instances, it would be a professional or even legal expectation that information is ultimately shared with an outreach worker's supervisor or agency. In other instances, an outreach worker may take comfort in talking through a scenario with a collaborative member and feel supported or more informed without having to go to their supervisor.

In the case of an extreme job-related trauma, a supervisor should be prepared to help connect their outreach worker to counseling or therapeutic services to work through issues or experiences that may be beyond the scope of regular supervision. They could potentially even need short term disability leave before feeling healthy enough to return to the job.

Supervisors also need to be able to help process what they need after a traumatic event to continue their work in a healthy and effective way. Outreach workers may also decide that outreach is no longer an option in which case a supervisor can help connect them to different employment opportunities within the agency or with another agency.

Module 6

Engagement

MODULE 6: ENGAGEMENT

Engaging with the Outreach Worker

Due to the nature of street outreach work happening off-site with little accountability, outreach workers can often feel lonely, detached and unsupported by the agency they work for. Outreach workers will do their best work when they have a positive relationship with their agency and the collaborative, and are invested in the mission each is working toward. Fostering these professional relationships and sense of connectedness is an important responsibility of the supervisor.

Supervisors should highlight the importance of the outreach worker's work and how it supports agency mission. Supervisors should also avoid negative agency politics or drama unless it directly affects their work. Supervisors should work toward building positive trusting relationships between the outreach worker and the agency in the same way we expect our outreach workers to build positive trusting relationships with youth and community members.

Strength-based approaches aren't just useful with youth. Focus on the areas where the outreach worker is excelling and tease out skills from this area that can be applied to challenge areas. Everyone learns best when they feel comfortable, heard and appreciated. Grow rapport. The outreach worker isn't your friend but finding common ground to develop a strong professional rapport is important. Find subjects on which you connect, and don't be afraid to have personal check-ins during supervision.

Engaging with Youth

Peers and new outreach workers should be reminded on a regular basis that in order to do much else with a client, one of their main job functions is to build relationships. Building relationships happens over time and often very slowly. Many new outreach workers will spend the first few months, if not more, on the street feeling unrecognizable, unapproachable and inadequate at their job. They most likely will not be acknowledged by youth on the street and their phones will seem silent compared to that of their more experienced partners. This stage of the work can often feel lonely, unproductive and frustrating for a new outreach worker.

Engagement is a necessary step to building relationships and for some of us it comes more naturally than for others. When hiring a new outreach worker, supervisors should not overlook the quiet or more reserved applicants for fear they won't be relatable and able to engage young people. Young people connect themselves to all personality types. Talking less and listening more can be equally effective at engaging a young person who just wants to be heard or maybe doesn't have a lot to say but appreciates the safe and non-threatening presence of an outreach worker.

Whether the outreach worker is extroverted or introverted, all youth workers appreciate concepts, ideas, theories and strategies for engagement that can be passed down from those with more experience. As the supervisor of outreach workers, it will be in everyone's best interest to provide the outreach worker with as much of this knowledge as possible (tools for their professional tool box).

Talk to them about developing a personal youth-work style. Remind them that trying to do outreach exactly like one outreach worker isn't necessarily going to work for another outreach worker. If the outreach worker doesn't know what their style is, encourage them to explore different approaches to the work. If something doesn't feel authentic, then try something else. Think about how you effectively work with other people/professional settings in your life, and grow from there.

Module 7

Harm Reduction

MODULE 7: HARM REDUCTION

Practicing harm reduction in an outreach capacity exposes the outreach worker to more ambiguous situations, higher levels of vicarious and first-hand trauma, and requires far more patience around positive and safe results for the clients with whom they are working. As a result, an outreach worker's supervisor needs to emphasize coaching and support their workers' self-care practices.

From the first day of orientation till their last day of employment, supervisors should continue to revisit the role of an outreach worker and the purpose it serves in supporting young people experiencing homelessness and/or sexual exploitation. Common themes to revisit during supervision include:

- Being a safe adult presence on the street
- Engaging and building positive trusting relationships
- Connecting to resources and increasing networks of support
- Providing basic needs
- Supporting the health and safety of young people without judgement on their behaviors
- Practicing self-care to prevent burnout
- Unhealthy boundaries and ineffective youth work.

It is also important for supervisors to remind outreach workers what is not included in their job description by addressing things such as savior mentality, healthy work life balance, personal values and judgements and biases. The job of an outreach worker is to be an approachable, trustworthy presence for all youth out in the community that is capable of meeting some immediate basic needs and connecting youth to resources for their more long-term needs. Outreach workers are not expected to be experts in all areas regarding services for youth, instead they are to help create a network of expert professionals for the youth.

Self-Care and Balance

Healthy employees are generally more reliable, experience lower rates of turnover, have better professional boundaries and experience more positive and impactful interactions with the youth they serve. In this case, when we talk about the health of our employees, we are referring to a balance that one achieves between being productive and achieving outcomes through the work we do on the streets with young people and taking care of oneself (physically, mentally, and emotionally) so that we can do our best work in a way that is sustainable over time.

As a supervisor, it is important to encourage, support and model a balanced approach to the work we do and the life we live in an effort to be our best at both. Supervisors should recognize and respect that balance is different for every individual, while offering opportunities for outreach workers/peers to learn about and engage in practices that encourage physical, mental and emotional health while meeting the demands and expectations of work and life.

Self-care is achievable on many levels both at work and off the clock. The most basic personal self-care begins with making sure our most basic survival needs are being met as human beings. Getting enough sleep, eating healthy, drinking water and some amount of physical activity are necessary for people to achieve optimal health.

Most people also have social emotional needs around acceptance, belonging, feeling connected, supported and loved that keep them balanced and healthy. As a supervisor it can be challenging and even inappropriate to support employees on such a personal level. Playing the role of health care provider or therapist creates unclear and potentially unhealthy boundaries. However, having conversations one-on-one or in a group setting about what individuals do to stay healthy and achieve balance can be productive. It can remind people of the importance of balance, and hearing other people's strategies can inspire individuals to make changes or incorporate new practices. This type of conversation may also open doors for coworkers to connect and engage in healthy ways outside of work if they have common interests.

While personal self-care is ultimately in the hands of the individual, there are many things we can be mindful of and incorporate as supervisors to encourage professional self-care.

Personal Boundaries:

- *Values.* As supervisors it is important to role model and teach the importance of separating work from home. This can also involve keeping personal, political and religious values separate from the non-judgmental, harm reduction focused work we agree to as professional youth workers.
- *Clocking out/being done.* The separation of work and personal time can also be enforced with healthy limits on work phone use and clocking out at the end of a shift. With good boundaries and clear communication, it is completely appropriate and healthy for youth work to stop at the end of a shift and not resume until that outreach worker's next scheduled shift.

Shift length. Due to the flexible nature of scheduling outreach shifts, it often becomes tempting for outreach workers to squeeze a bulk of their hours into a couple days a week so that they may pursue other employment or personal interests. Ideally, a typical outreach shift should range from two to five hrs. The nature of street outreach is physically, socially and emotionally challenging. Engaging at that level for more than five hours is not sustainable for most individuals. Extra-long shifts, or back-to-back shifts, can often result in a lower awareness of one's surroundings leading to safety concerns, less emotional energy to engage youth in meaningful or productive ways, and can eventually affect the physical health of an outreach worker. Consistently long shifts can lead to outreach worker burnout and ineffectiveness over time.

Time off. Encourage outreach workers to use PTO and take regular breaks throughout their employment to detach, recharge and stay fresh. Time off can also be encouraged and supported as a way for an outreach worker/peer to engage in activities that they feel passionate about or identify with but may not be able to incorporate into their professional lives for various reasons. Examples include things such as political rallies, social demonstrations, volunteer work or religious practices.

Team work. Supervisors should regularly be reminding and encouraging outreach workers to use the support of the collaborative and their partners. The StreetWorks Collaborative was created under the premise that street outreach was more effective, safer and provided better experiences for the youth we work with when professionals from different agencies providing complimentary services and opportunities worked together as a team. Outreach workers should be encouraged to make time at the end of every shift to process with their partner and use the larger team of outreach workers for specific case consultations in addition to seeking support and advice from you as their supervisor. The StreetWorks Collaborative can also provide outreach workers with an option to “pass the baton” when time runs out on their shift, or they hit a wall and no longer feel like they are having a positive or productive interaction with a young person. The diversity of outreach workers within the collaborative allows the team to meet the diverse needs, personalities and realities of the youth we serve.

Self-expression. Supervisors should encourage outreach workers to express themselves and find multiple outlets to process all the complex emotions that come from this kind of work. This can be as simple as regular supervision check-ins. It can be more of a creative process like journaling, drawing, painting etc. In some cases, an outreach workers/peers may experience trauma in life or on the job that go above and beyond what their supervisor is able to support. As a supervisor it is important to have clear boundaries around how you are able to support the outreach worker and the job your agency is asking them to do. Know your limits and use your professional team to connect your outreach worker to the support they need whether it be counseling, therapy, or time off to address their mental health.

Peer Worker Considerations:

Consider the following when working with a peer/intern to teach self-care and healthy balance.

1. Shift length – Four to six hours is a good amount of time for a shift, whereas stretching it beyond that time frame can contribute to burn out.
2. All workers need to have a work phone that is separate from their personal phone to ensure clear boundaries. When the shift is over, the worker needs the opportunity to be off duty.
3. Partner relations are important to the health and well-being of a worker; check in with the peers to ensure the relationship is going well and teach them how to handle conflict if it occurs.
4. Peers need to have time off to rest and restore. Often new workers are eager to please and don't take the time off they need. Sometimes a supervisor needs to say it's time for a vacation.

