Health Promotion in the Irish Prison Community

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WHO Definition of Health Promotion

The World Health Organization defines health promotion as “the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment. Health Promotion is not just the responsibility of health sector, but goes beyond healthy lifestyles to well-being”.

Community Based Health & First Aid In Action (CBHFA)

CBHFA In Action was originally designed by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to be facilitated globally in communities in a simple and flexible way through the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Society of each of the 189 countries where the Movement is present.

The CBHFA approach empowers volunteers and communities to take charge of their own health. By using simple tools, adapted to respective local context, communities are mobilized to address and prioritize their health needs. CBHFA encourages health promotion in action since people have increased control of their health and their community’s health.

How CBHFA works in Irish Prisons

Every prison in Ireland has a healthcare department responsible for health services for the inmates. Majority of the services rendered were reactive. There was no connection or interim point between the prison community and healthcare.

The Irish Prison Service saw the CBHFA as a model that would address this need, by serving as the interim point and providing preventative health initiatives (health promotion) through inmate volunteers who trained and served as peer to peer health educators in their community.

The Irish Prison Service, Irish Red Cross and the Education & Training Board collaborated to establish logistical set up of the CBHFA program within the prison community.

The program was established in 2009 and has been rolled out in all Irish Prisons to date.

Program Accolades and Future

- In the past 6 years, the program success has depended heavily on dedicated volunteers; and cost is kept at a minimum.
- The program has received local awards and global recognition and has generated interests from other countries for implementation e.g. Northern Ireland, United Kingdom, Honduras, Canada etc.
- The program is currently working to extend into post-prison communities by keeping the inmates engaged in their local communities as special status volunteers upon their release.

Key Practicum Learning

- CBHFA was not “intended” to be used in developed countries, however creativity and contextual adjustments ensured successful program execution in the Irish Prisons. This demonstrates the importance of creativity in public health initiatives.
- Self Sustainability is a key part of ensuring the long-term success of public health projects.
- The effectiveness of peer-to-peer education.

Health Promotion in Action - Projects completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TB Prevention</td>
<td>Tuberculosis awareness, diagnosis, and treatment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smoking Cessation</td>
<td>Smoking cessation programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Health Awareness</td>
<td>HIV/AIDS, STI, and consent education</td>
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<td>Mental Health Awareness Program</td>
<td>Mental health education and support</td>
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<td>Recycling Center Project</td>
<td>Waste management and recycling education</td>
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<td>Paracetamol Reduction Project</td>
<td>Drug misuse reduction programs</td>
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<td>New In Prison Buddy Support Program</td>
<td>Support for new prison arrivals</td>
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<td>Overdose Prevention Program</td>
<td>Substance use disorder prevention</td>
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<td>Violence Prevention Program</td>
<td>Personal safety and conflict resolution training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care &amp; Nursing Referral</td>
<td>Referral to healthcare services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drug Use And Stigma Reduction</td>
<td>Stigma reduction programs</td>
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Key Stakeholders

- Irish Red Cross
- Irish Prison Service
- Volunteer Inmates
- Education & Training Boards Ireland

Key Stakeholders Responsibilities:

- Provide education and learning support within Irish prisons
- Provide the CBHFA support information pack
- Responsible for prison logistics & operations in all 14 prisons in Ireland
- Initiated CBHFA idea with Irish Red Cross
- Engage prison stuff in the CBHFA program in prisons
- Support CBHFA logistics and initial training in prisons
- Provide CBHFA trainings to stakeholders
- Grant volunteer inmates a special Red Cross status within the prison community
- Identify health needs in their community
- Lead projects within their community
- Serve as liaison between their community & IPS

References

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies website: www.ifrc.org

CBHFA Support Information Pack, March 2015

Acknowledgements

Dr. Graham Betts-Symonds – Health Care & Nursing Manager Irish Prison Service and CBHFA Program Director
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