

STRAIGHT SPEAKERS BUREAU

STRAIGHT, INC. presents a basic awareness program to enlighten the audience in the following areas: 1) to understand the current patterns of teenage drug-use; 2) to recognize kids' verbal and active behaviors that indicate the presence of drug-use and 3) to discuss how the Straight Program can help.

The presentation will include a parent's brief discussion of his/her family life when their child was using drugs, a client's story about his/her drug-using past, remarks from the parents and/or the children about their lives today, and how these changes have occurred for the entire family with the help of Straight.

A brief history of Straight, (the objectives of the program and information about admission procedures) should also be included.

We suggest you know your group and the goal of the speaking engagement; awareness, fund raising, etc. Speaking engagements should be limited to the time frame indicated by the organization. Knowing time allotted allows speakers to plan method of covering all important points. For example, many civic groups allow 15 minutes for a presentation and 5 to 10 for questions and answers. Some organizations may request a video tape presentation. If this is used, a brief introduction may precede the tape, followed by a question and answer period at the end. Ascertain number of attendees prior to date to have adequate number of handouts.

Specific questions dealing with clinical or technical matters (treatment modality, structure, rationale) should be answered by a staff person. In the event a staff member is not present, parents may respond with, "I can tell you about my experience as a parent, and about my child, my family and our changes, but I suggest that you call Pam [redacted] at phone# [redacted]. She will see that your questions are answered". Stress progress - Where you were and where you are today. Avoid words like "fanatical" or "controversial". Don't go into any specific unusual aspects of past. Don't give too much information. Goal is to get people in for help. Tell, but don't sell.

Clients should introduce themselves with first names only, their age, their drug(s) of choice, length of time they used drugs, and how long they have been drug free. They can continue with comments about how they have learned to make changes in their lives with the help of Straight and conclude with an example about their life today.

Parents should discuss the program in terms of themselves and their family. Parents' story to be told briefly and without all specific details. No age and personal drugs used, etc. need be included. (Avoid mentioning issues of divorce and single parenting because some people will become judgemental, relating these problems with the issue of your child's drug abuse. Also never mention the name of another treatment program you child may have been in). Stages of drug usage and phases of the program can be discussed when appropriate. Prospective speakers should be given training in ways to handle commonly asked questions.

A closing statement should include information about how referrals are made to Straight: parents should call the information office. Expressing gratitude to group for opportunity to speak should be stated before going to questions.

Parents -- or any professional -- may call [phone#] for information.

Parents should complete a Speakers Bureau form following the engagement and return to Pam [redacted]. Forms will be maintained at Straight Office.

Specifics of the engagement should be given to Pam [redacted] so a thank you letter can be written.

STRAIGHT STAFF

Professional staff should be used for certain occasions which involve other treatment programs, professional groups in the medical and psychological fields, or as determined by staff.

Parent coordinator should notify Straight Office about speaking engagement dates as soon as possible. Speaking engagements will be reviewed at weekly Parent Group Meetings. A reminder call should be made shortly before the presentation date.

USE OF STRAIGHT CLIENTS

Client(s) will be selected by staff and is/are responsible for submitting necessary permissions.

Client transportation is arranged in coordination with community services and the parent speaker.

CONCLUSION

It is suggested that speaking engagements are concluded with an invitation to visit Straight.

It has proven effective also to close with information about our Admissions procedures. Example: "If you know a family who may have a child using drugs, encourage them to call Straight. They may bring their child in for an assessment to determine if he/she is appropriate for treatment."

Please be sure to stress that complete information is available at the Straight office. These appointments allow the parents to talk at length with a staff member about their son/daughter and the possibility of their using drugs and also learn about Straight to determine if Straight is appropriate for their family.

QUESTIONS about the following are frequently asked:

Background: Straight was founded 13 years ago in St. Petersburg, FL by several parents who had kids using drugs. There were few adolescent treatment programs 13 years ago. The parents visited several treatment facilities and took the best components of several facilities and incorporated them to make the Straight Program. Straight was founded as a small organization and has grown to be the largest non-profit adolescent drug treatment program in the United States.

Straight is located in the following cities. Tampa Bay and Orlando, Florida, Dallas, Michigan (Plymouth, near Detroit), Boston and Greater Washington, Atlanta, and Hampton Roads will be the eighth.

Age range of clients treated: 12 to young adult.

Cost: Straight is private, non-profit. Compared to other treatment programs, the cost is very inexpensive. JCAHO accredited. Most insurances will cover.

Success Rate: 70 percent of the people who graduate are drug-free two years later and are leading productive lives and having a good family relationship, compared with national average of 2-3%.

Staffing: Straight has two levels of staff: A paraprofessional staff and a professional staff. Our paraprofessional staff is made up of young people who have graduated from the Straight program, completed staff training and served an internship. This has proven very effective and successful as these young people know how the clients feel because they've been there.

Our professional staff has been educated, trained and have prior experience in the field of chemical dependency.

Our medical staff includes an RN, a pediatrician and a psychiatrist.

Final Thoughts:

Make an outline of what you wish to cover. Practice your delivery and keep track of time.

Some important points:

- 1) You will probably feel nervous or anxious about making your talk. This is really a good sign because it means you are concerned. This feeling will vary depending on your own experience in talking before a group.
- 2) Remember, you are the expert when you are talking about your own personal experiences. You actually lived what you are talking about. By sharing, you may help someone through his/her denial and save a child's life. Relax.
- 3) If asked a question and you do not know the answer, don't fake it. Simply say, "I don't know, but I'll find out and give you a call if you will give me your phone number."
- 4) Tell your audience about Straight, don't sell them. Leave that to staff.
- 5) Tell them how to get in touch with the local office. Give them our phone number.
- 6) Thank your audience before you sit down.
- 7) Dress in a way that reflects well on Straight and yourself. People will make judgements about the Program base on what they see as well as what you say.

STRAIGHT, INC.
HAMPTON ROADS
PARENT SPEAKER FORMAT
DON'T LIST

1. Don't use profanity. Some people will find it offensive, and there is usually a more appropriate way of expressing ourselves.
2. Don't discuss your own past or present use of drugs or alcohol.
3. Don't use statistics unless you can personally relate to them.
4. Don't use all inclusive statements such as "All Straight kids use drugs by the age of 12".
5. Don't be defensive about any question(s) asked by the audience, regardless of how inappropriate it/they may be.
6. Don't break confidentiality of other program participants.
7. Don't use Straight jargon such as "phasers", "copouts" or "setbacks".
8. Don't fake an answer. If you don't know the answer to something, get their name and number, and pass this information along to Pam.
9. Don't make arrangements for speaking engagements without submitting appropriate forms.
10. Don't bring any previously unapproved speakers/observers without first clearing it with staff or speakers bureau chairperson. This includes clients.
11. Don't mention other programs your child may have been in by name.
12. Avoid mentioning issues of divorce and single parenting, (some people will become judgemental, relating these problems with the issue of your child's drug abuse).
13. Don't pass out hand-out literature until after your presentation.

STRAIGHT FACTS

STRAIGHT, Inc.

- Was founded in 1976 by a group of businessmen and concerned parents in St. Petersburg, Florida, where National headquarters is still located.
- Currently has eight (8) branches:
 - St. Petersburg, Florida
 - Orlando, Florida
 - Atlanta, Ga.
 - Detroit, Michigan
 - Dallas, Texas
 - Boston, Mass.
 - Springfield, Virginia (Greater Washington, D.C. area)
 - Chesapeake, Virginia (Hampton Roads)
- Greater Washington, D.C. program opened in October 1982 and is the largest, with 258 clients at present.
- Private, non profit organization (no local, state or federal funding).
- Client ages range from 12 to young adult.
- Open to all races and religions.
- Operating expenses: 65% client fees.
35% private donations.
- Average stay is 12 to 18 months and 6 months aftercare.
- Covered by Champus and other insurance companies. (Coverage varies depending on individual policy).
- 70% success rate.
- Focuses treatment process on the self-help philosophy of "Kids helping kids" and "Parents helping parents".
- Treatment uses proven principles of AA 12 Steps.
- Individual program allows kids to progress at their own level.