Internet Safety for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

United States
Heather Shnyder
Organization type: nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Budget: $500,000 - $1 million
Website: http://www.svwit.org

At risk youth
Abuse & violence
Crime prevention
Disability rights
Child exploitation
Human trafficking
Vulnerable populations

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition will modify its award-winning Internet Safety Video and curriculum to target individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The video, which was originally recorded with high school student actors, will be re-shot using actors with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Subtitles will also be added to the original video for the hearing impaired.

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

The original Internet Safety Video and curriculum does not meet the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities or the hearing impaired. It was created for mainstream public middle and high school students and is designed for those grade levels. Those age appropriate individuals who have intellectual and developmental disabilities are not able to process and comprehend the video in its current state. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt the script and re-film using actors with similar disabilities with whom the audience can identify. It is imperative that we do this so the viewers will be able to better comprehend the video's message and follow along much more easily. It is also important to sub-title both the existing video and the new video to address the needs of individuals who are hearing impaired.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition's produced an Internet safety video that won the prestigious 14th Annual Communicator's Award of Excellence in 2008 in the category of Social Issues. Our video was chosen out of 8,000 entries to achieve this award. Through research we found no other curriculum that educates the target population of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities on the topic of internet safety. Utilizing focus groups we learned that the current internet safety video script will need to be re-filmed using actors with similar disabilities with whom the audience can identify. Re-filming will present the information on internet safety in context situations and in a manner that will be more easily comprehended by the target population. Our focus group commented that the presentation of the content in the existing video would be difficult for many of the students in the target population to interpret. Likewise the program handouts and information sheets that reflect the statistics and general subject matter need to be re-designed to meet varied learning styles. Approximately 51.2 million people, or 18 percent, in the United States have a disability with roughly 11 percent of children ages 6 to 14 affected. Approximately 3 percent of the U.S. population has a developmental disability. As the internet becomes more accessible to all individuals, safety education for individuals with disabilities is crucial. They are among the highest at risk for target by predators. It is our plan to offer this program to other crisis agencies on a National level.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

Since its creation in 2007, Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition's original Internet Safety Video has had a dramatic impact on its target population of middle and high school students. Over the past three years, approximately 100,000 students, teachers, and parents in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have viewed the original Internet Safety Video. After viewing the video, conversation ignites among students who voice their concerns and questions, which often results in a debate, leading to an overall general interest and greater awareness of Internet dangers. Students have identified specific questionable online content, and parents have expressed the need for further information regarding filter blocks and safety tips to protect their children online. Because of this video's impact, the demand for its presentation, even outside of our tri-county service area, has become increasingly challenging. It is because of this impact that our agency has been asked by the Central
Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU), a local agency that provides, among other services, quality education to students with disabilities, to adapt this current video and curriculum to meet the needs of a variety of new target audiences, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and the hearing impaired.

About You

Organization:
Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition
Visit website

About You
First Name
Heather
Last Name
Shnyder
Website
http://www.svwit.org

Organization
Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition
Country
, PA, Union County

About Your Organization

Organization Name
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, PA, Union County

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.

Your idea

Country your work focuses on
, PA, Union County
Website URL
http://www.svwit.org

Innovation

Do you have a patent for this idea?

Impact

Actions
Our agency has met with representatives from the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit and has conducted three focus groups of between 5 to 12 students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to view the current Internet Safety Video and suggest changes. Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition’s CEO, DiAnn Baxley and Education Director, Heather Shnyder have also met with the original production company, Patterson-Brandt Inc., to discuss the adaptation’s feasibility and budget. With all of the community support, the only barrier to prevent the proposed project’s success is lack of funding.

Results
The expected result is to reach a much broader audience and to educate individuals not normally in the day-to-day mainstream programs on the topic of Internet Safety. The goal of the project is to increase the skills of the target audience to navigate the Internet more safely. Historically, individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have been marginalized by society and have not always been taught the skills necessary to help keep themselves safe. This video and curriculum is one step in eliminating this problem.
What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

During year one, Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition will revise the current script to engage individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and encourage students from the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU) to participate in this initial step. The next step will be to begin filming the new video with Patterson-Brandt Inc. at various locations using student actors from the CSIU. We will revise and begin duplication of our Internet Safety statistic sheets, safety tips, and all other printed materials pertaining to the project. Additional focus groups will be created to view the draft of the video and make necessary changes before the final edit of the film. Also during year one, sub-titles will be added to the current Internet Safety Video for the hearing impaired. Marketing of the video and curriculum will begin in year one and continue throughout years two and three. Upon completion of the new Internet Safety Video and curriculum, we will begin presenting this program in the CSIU, group homes and all other facilities that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Student peer trainers will be part of all presentations. During years two and three, our agency would like to promote this program nationally in order to reach a larger number of individuals and agencies. It is our goal to provide necessary train-the-trainer opportunities as part of our outreach and presentations.

What would prevent your project from being a success?

Due to the overall encouragement and backing of the community, our only concern for the project not being successful is the lack of funding to fulfill the obligation of providing the same level of education to individuals with disabilities as mainstream students receive.

How many people will your project serve annually?

More than 10,000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?

$1000 - 4000

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy?

Sustainability

What stage is your project in?

Operating for less than a year

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?

Yes

If yes, provide organization name.

Susquehanna Valley Women In Transition

How long has this organization been operating?

More than 5 years

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?

Yes

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?

Yes

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with businesses?

Yes

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with government?

Yes

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.

Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition has Memorandums of Understanding with schools, Evangelical Community Hospital and multiple organizations within the Criminal Justice System. These partnerships ensure that victims of crime are informed of the availability of services and support. With regard to this innovation, the most important partnership affecting this project would be with local schools to continue prevention education within the classroom, including classrooms devoted to educating students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?

The three most important actions needed to reach the goal of educating and increasing the skill set of individuals with disabilities when navigating the Internet are (1) revising and re-filming the Internet Safety Video utilizing actors with intellectual and developmental disabilities with whom the audience can relate, (2) revising and duplicating the printed materials to reflect a variety of learning modalities to meet the individual learning needs of the students to whom the program is being presented, and (3) to present the newly developed Internet Safety Video and curriculum to the target audience for which it was designed. These actions will ensure that the students who view the video and participate in the curriculum will be adequately prepared to safely browse the Internet.

The Story

What was the defining moment that you led to this innovation?

The Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit approached our agency in early May 2010 with the idea to have students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) complete their community service component for graduation with our organization. DiAnn Baxley, Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition CEO suggest that our award winning Internet Safety Video and curriculum be adapted to utilize with individuals with I/DD and that the students participate as peer presenters. CSIU and SVWIT immediately recognized the need for this program within this
population and the positive impact that this project proposal would have on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Agency CEO, DiAnn Baxley, and Education Director, Heather Shnyder, met with representatives of CSIU to discuss the specific changes that the video and curriculum would need before being appropriate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. During this time, three focus groups of CSIU students with these types of disabilities were created to review the video and curriculum as it currently stands. In one of these focus groups, Heather Shnyder recognized one of the students in attendance. This student and Ms. Shnyder had met at the Milton Area High School in April 2010 when the latter was there to present the Internet Safety video and curriculum in a mainstream classroom. This student had come into the classroom over the lunch period when Ms. Shnyder was setting up for the program, and the student viewed the video for a few minutes. When the student had to leave to go to her specialized classroom, she stated to Ms. Shnyder, “I wish someone would come into one of my classrooms and teach these things to us”. Ms. Shnyder remembered this statement and often pondered ways in which to bring this program to a broader population. Approximately one month later, the CSIU contacted our agency. Research about necessary changes and feasibility and budget investigations have already commenced. Once funding sources are established the staffs of Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition, the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, and the production company Patterson Brandt, Inc. are ready to begin work on this very important project.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.

The Social Innovator behind the project idea is DiAnn Baxley, Chief Executive Officer of Susquehanna Valley Women in Transition (SVWIT). Ms. Baxley brings over 30 years experience in working with the target population. She is an expert researcher and presenter on issues of sexuality and individuals with I/DD. She has developed sexuality education curriculum for individuals with I/DD for the state of Florida designed to educate students, educators and parents on how to empower individuals with I/DD to develop safe, non-abusive relationships. The innovator behind the internet safety program is Heather Shnyder, the current Education Director. Our agency has been providing prevention education programs in the schools for almost ten years. We are very excited about the proposed Internet Safety Awareness Program for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Through this project, it is our goal to increase the knowledge and skill sets of individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) to safely navigate the Internet. Ms. Baxley knows from her years of work, all students are in need of prevention education and awareness programs, particularly individuals with I/DD who are not always present in customary public school classroom setting during prevention programs presentations. Individuals with I/DD are at a higher risk for abuse because of the lack of inclusion in prevention education classes; they use the Internet to browse topics and issues that interest them, just like peers in mainstream classes. Their understanding may be at a different level than that of a typical middle or high school student, and yet have very similar interest in the “world wide web”. With all things considered it is time to reach out to this population and provide trainings and educational programs beginning with our Award Winning Internet Safety Video and curriculum. As the winner of the 14th Annual Communicator's Award of Excellence, our video has received a very high honor and has generated a demand for the program at an increasingly challenging rate. Our longstanding public recognition for quality prevention education and the expertise of Ms. Baxley and Ms. Shnyder position SVWIT to successfully design and implement the proposed internet safety program for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?

Through another organization or company

If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company

The Foundation Center at www.fdncenter.org.

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