

SEX WORKER PEER EDUCATION: MORE THAN A SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACH

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Background/Purpose:

Sex workers invaluable knowledge of the sex industry, sexual health information and unique sex work skills make sex workers involvement crucial in developing HIV programs aimed at sex workers. Although sex worker peer-education is recognised as a vital component of the HIV response in the Asia-Pacific region, the peer-education approach is often only reserved for service delivery. Scarlet Alliance utilised a peer-education approach to produce a national online sexual health resource, also known as the Redbook, to holistically address the wide-ranging needs of sex workers.

Approach:

Scarlet Alliance utilised a peer-education approach in which sex workers directed and produced every aspect of the Redbook. Sex workers were consulted through Scarlet Alliance's membership of peer-educators and individual sex workers across Australia and our sex worker steering committee. Even after the Redbook is published, sex workers will be provided with on-going opportunities to update the resource to ensure it continues to reflect the changing needs of sex workers.

Outcomes/Impact:

The Redbook is a targeted, tailored and holistic resource that covers topics including sexual and reproductive health information, sex worker services and skills, sexual health and sex industry laws and relevant referrals. The Redbook is an ongoing project that is updated to reflect the social, legal and cultural environments sex workers are working within. Sex workers participation in the production of the Redbook fostered a deep sense of community engagement and recognises sex workers crucial role in the HIV response.

Innovation and significance:

The utilisation of the peer-education approach in the design, production and implementation of the Redbook has resulted in a resource that is up-to-date, tailored and holistically meets the wide-ranging sexual health needs of sex workers. The utilisation of the peer-education approach in the development of the Redbook provides a way to incorporate sex worker expertise and skills in the HIV response beyond service delivery.
