# A “How-To” Guide to

# CHOICES theatre-in-education Safer Partying project

**WHAT IS CHOICES?**

**CHOICES 2011 is a Safer Partying project** using theatre-in-education to promote safer partying to high school and alternative education students aged approximately 13 to 16. CHOICES was originally aimed to help at-risk young people, however the subject matter is relevant to all young people on some level.

**BACKGROUND**

Originally developed by HYPE-GS, Mess Up The Mess Theatre Company and Health Action Trust, **CHOICES** was created in Nelson in 2008, based on young people’s personal experiences and stories of when partying went wrong.

The stories were developed into a script with the help of Nelson/Tasman young people and four youth actors. The stories portrayed in **CHOICES** are not their actual stories but a collection of different issues raised by young people in relation to partying. (Please note that partying could refer to any type of gathering involving young people)

**AIMS**

1. Promote safer partying techniques and openly and realistically discuss youth risk-taking behaviour.
2. Ensure young people are empowered to make informed choices with regard to how they party.
3. Improve youth sexual, physical, mental and emotional health.
4. Reduce the levels of crime carried out and criminalisation of young people as a result of partying.
5. Open up a dialogue with young people over current partying trends and issues.

**DESCRIPTION**

**CHOICES** portrays a night of partying that goes wrong for the characters – at the extreme end of the scale of what may happen during a night of partying in a 25-minute high energy performance.

The performance is followed by **Forum Theatre** to re-work selected scenes.

Forum Theatre is a technique created by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal, to enable an audience to explore and analyse the reality in which they are living.

1. The script is first played as written; the actors playing out their characters’ destructive and/or uninformed choices with disastrous consequences.
2. The script is then replayed, but now audience members are invited by the coordinator to intervene and suggest other behavioural choices to the actors which will have more positive outcomes. (Members of the audience can also be invited to come up on stage and perform the new behaviours themselves.)

**WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?**

This How-To guide is designed to provide a framework of key tasks and duties for the production of the CHOICES programme in your area.

It includes templates for you to adapt and use in your own delivery of the project.

**TASK LIST**

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| **Task** | **Person Responsible** | **Date Completed** |
| **Identify key partner organisations**   * Meet with community stakeholders such as Police, Community Health, Youth Work, etc * Identify which organisations will be “key partners” to deliver the project * Discuss roles for each organisation |  |  |
| **Memorandum of Understanding**   * Establish and agree which partner organisations are responsible for what parts of the project. * Seek agreement for inclusion of logos for documentation and resources, as required. * Write up and circulate a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). * When responsibilities are agreed, ensure each party has a signed copy.   MoU Template attached |  |  |
| **Funding / Budget**   * Develop a project budget to inform funding applications. * Identify potential funders or sponsors and make applications as required.   See [www.communitymatters.govt.nz](http://www.communitymatters.govt.nz) for information about the community advisory services, Lottery grants, COGS (the Community Organisation Grants Scheme) and Crown-funded schemes and trusts administered by the Department of Internal Affairs.   * After funding is confirmed, develop a working budget to fit within your means. * Use a self-adding Excel spreadsheet to monitor spending and balances during the project. * Revise budget during project as required.   Budget template attached |  |  |

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| **Liaise with Schools and Alternative Education Providers**   * Contact schools a minimum of 6 months prior to touring eg: end of term 4 or beginning term one. * Send letters to Principals, Head Health Department and Head of Guidance including: * CHOICES Background Information * CHOICES Program Description * Proposed Itinerary * Contact details of tour coordinator   Schools Letter template attached.   * Follow up with schools * Confirm dates and times of performances * Confirm entire schedule.   NB: To ensure your actors remain energetic while touring, it is best to ensure your schedule does not exceed 10 performances in a week (including evening performances).   * Ask schools to promote evening performances to parents (provide hard-copy and PDF flyers) * Send Gatekeepers information to the contact person. |  |  |
| **Update Script**   * Consult with youth workers to identify primary issues for local young people relating to local AOD behaviours. * Update the CHOICES script to ensure it is current and relevant to your community. * Minor amendments may be required throughout the rehearsal period   A copy of the script is attached.  *NB: The CHOICES script is copyrighted to HYPE-GS and Mess-Up-the-Mess Theatre Co* |  |  |
| **Pre-Production Evaluation**   * Use programme logic model to identify evaluation priorities * Identify who will provide evaluation feedback, eg: young people, parents, teachers etc. * Prepare evaluation feedback questionnaires as required.   Sample questionnaires attached. |  |  |
| **Director**   * Advertise   NB: you should allow at least 4 weeks for responses.   * Schedule interviews * Negotiate & sign contract. * Arrange accommodation for director. * Organise rehearsal schedule.   Director Contract Template attached |  |  |
| **Youth actors**   * Advertise - You can advertise with local theatre companies, newspapers, [Toi Whakaari/NZ Drama School](http://www.toiwhakaari.ac.nz/), NASDA, etc   NB: you should allow at least 4 weeks for responses.  NB: Actors must beskilled in forum theatre and group facilitation.   * Schedule auditions and interviews   NB: include your Director on the interview panel   * Negotiate & sign contracts / per diem payments * Train all crew on safer partying and harm minimisation messages * Book rehearsal venues * Inform actors of:   + Rehearsal schedule   + Tour schedule   + What they need to provide themselves, (black clothing)   + Accommodation & food provisions, etc * Arrange an introductory event prior to rehearsals for the team to get together eg dinner. * Inform actors who they can talk to if there are any issues during the production. * Arrange accommodation for actors when the schedule is confirmed.   Sample Actor Advertisement attached. |  |  |

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| **Designer**   * Recruit a designer * Get quotes for the following design jobs: * Update or create your own CHOICES branding * Performance program and safer partying tips for young people. * Flyer promoting public (evening) showings including dates and venues * Newspaper advertising for public showings   NB: After all design work is completed, ensure that open/working copies of the design files are held by the key partner organisations.  Sample Programme and Flyer attached. |  |  |
| **Promotion**   * Create press releases to be used at different stages of promotion. * Launch your project with media releases and maybe include a guest speaker as a prelude to the initial performance. * Send copies of release to community stakeholders for circulation via their networks. * Distribute hard copies promoting evening showings at community networking meetings and through community locations and schools. * Invite local media to attend production   Sample Promotional Items attached. |  |  |
| **Parent Performances**   * Identify and confirm facilitators for parent discussion evenings.   NB: You will need people who have skills in facilitation and knowledge of the issues, such as Counsellors, Youth Workers, Health Teachers, etc.  Topics for discussion at the parent evenings could include:   * Communication/negotiation with young people * Useful strategies * Parents supporting each other * Communication with other parents * How to find out what other parents do * Role modelling * Supply – providing alcohol to young people |  |  |
| **Resources for Young People**   * Identify and acquire resources to be given to students post-performance,  for example: * Get the MSG Drug Info test line cards - NZDF. * 0800 Drug helpline cards - ADANZ * Your Rights pamphlets – YouthLaw * Safer Partying Rules pamphlets – Health Action Trust. * Drink Spiking – Watch Yourself/Watch Your Friends pamphlets – Rape Crisis / Police. * Cannabis and Your Health pamphlets – Ministry of Health |  |  |
| **Resources for Staff**   * Identify and acquire resources to be given to staff post-performance,  for example: * Drugs in Focus – A guide to Alcohol and Other Drugs booklet – NZDF * More Than Just a Policy: Best Practise Alcohol and Other Drug Policy for Youth Organisations – Guidelines and Workbook – Health Action Trust |  |  |
| **Resources for Parents**   * Identify and acquire resources to be given to parents post-performance,  for example: * Bewildered booklet and DVD – ALAC * Alcohol and Your Kids booklet – ALAC * Drugs in Focus (Hosting Teenage Parties) booklet – NZDF * Drugs in Focus (Parent Focus) booklet – NZDF |  |  |

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| **The Tour**   * Hire transportation for all crew * Check you have all resources required for the tour/production:   🞎 Tour schedule  🞎 Contact list of schools and venues  🞎 Posters for Evening showings  🞎 Costumes  🞎 Performance Props  🞎 Sponsors’ Banners  🞎 Music  🞎 Camera  🞎 Recording equipment  🞎 Resources for students including CHOICES Youth Handouts  🞎 Resources for school staff  🞎 Lesson Plans  🞎 Resources for parents  🞎 CHOICES project Debit Card (or equivalent for purchases)  🞎 Food  🞎 Other items  …………………………………………………………………………………………….…. |  |  |
| **Curricular Support Material**   * Provide CHOICES Lesson Plans to schools.   Copy enclosed on disc |  |  |
| **Post-Production Evaluation**   * Debrief with actors and director * Analyse evaluation material * Complete reports based on evaluation feedback   NB: If funding permits it is best practise to employ an independent evaluator |  |  |

**This resource was developed by HYPE-GS and Health Action Trust August 2011**