



NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED



A Peer Support Program Toolkit



**NATURAL HELPERS
REIMAGINED**



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Natural Helpers: Reimagined is built around the foundation of the original Natural Helpers program. We wish to acknowledge the organizations and individuals who created that model for their foresight and hard work, which made this idea a powerful contributor to the healthy development of young people.

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Natural Helpers: Reimagined

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Need

Although the Natural Helpers program is no longer commercially available, the need for peer helper programs is well documented through the [2023 Healthy Youth Survey](#)

- An average of 15% of students reported they have considered attempting suicide in the past year.
- 1 in 16 students reported using one or more substances.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Washington teens 15–19 years old.
- 2 out of 3 students reported feeling nervous or anxious in the past two weeks.

What we do know is that on average, 50% of students report to turning to a friend or peer when they are feeling sad or hopeless.

In 2022, Governor Jay Inslee submitted a budget request to the Washington State Legislature to develop a peer support program based on some of the same principles that made the Natural Helpers program successful. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction was tasked with developing and testing the new model.

Natural Helpers: Reimagined

The new program contains the three primary elements of the original Natural Helpers program, a survey selection process, retreat training, and ongoing training. Natural Helpers: Reimagined has evolved in the following ways:

- It is a flexible toolkit, not a step-by-step curriculum.
- It is virtual, not a paper and pencil document.
- The toolkit is free to Washington State Schools.
- It is easier to implement, with brief descriptions and video examples that require less reading.
- It has new methods for supplementing the survey selection process.
- A wider selection of lessons.
- New roles for Natural Helpers.
- It has new research-based content.
- Links to video-based leader instructions.
- Links to handouts, resources, and student videos.
- New evaluation strategies.



OVERVIEW OF THE NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED PROGRAM



The Concept

Natural Helpers: Reimagined is a peer helping program designed to primarily serve middle school and high school students. The program is based on two simple beliefs. First is a belief that students know when their friends are in trouble long before school staff do. Second is a belief that young people turn to trusted friends and trusted adults for help first.

Within every school there is an informal helping network. Students with problems naturally seek out other students and school staff whom they trust, looking for advice, assistance, or a sympathetic ear. We call these trusted people Natural Helpers. The Natural Helpers: Reimagined program taps into this existing helping network and provides training and support for those trusted individuals. It helps them develop skills and connects them with resources that make them more effective.

Natural Helpers are a cross section of students and school staff identified through an anonymous **Schoolwide Survey**. Once selected as a Natural Helper they take part in **Retreat Training** where they learn to improve their helping skills and come together as a team. The training includes content on self-care, improving the culture and climate of the school, becoming an asset builder with friends and peers, helping skills, and how to make referrals. In training there is a focus on knowing your limits, and it is emphasized that ***Natural Helpers are not trained to function as counselors or therapists.*** The training experience is designed so that students have opportunities to meet appropriate adult referral sources.

After the Retreat Training, Natural Helpers participate in **Ongoing Training** throughout the school year which enhances basic skills and information covered at the retreat. Students participate in things like planning events to improve the culture and climate of their school and identifying strategies for engaging in random acts of asset building with friends and others. Ongoing Training also explores topics of concern to students like stress, cyberbullying, and relationships with friends and family.



Natural Helper Goals

There are four important goals of the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program:

1. To identify, support, and expand the peer helping network in schools.
2. To improve the culture and climate of schools by making it a kinder, more welcoming, and inclusive space.
3. To improve the quality and increase the number of helping interactions in schools.
4. To intervene earlier and increase the number of peer referrals to appropriate sources for serious mental health problems.

Natural Helper Roles

There are four important roles that student Natural Helpers may take part in. They are:

1. Prioritizing their self-care first, so they can be helpful to others.
2. Improving the culture and climate of the school to make it more welcoming and inclusive.
3. Helping friends work through everyday problems.
4. Referring friends with more serious concerns to appropriate adult helpers.



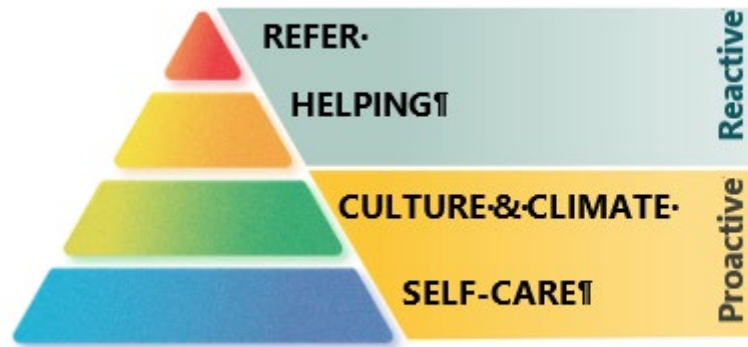


Figure 1: Pyramid of Natural Helper roles

As the pyramid illustrates, most of the Natural Helpers' work is proactive and directed at improving school climate and culture, as well as supporting friends. However, it is also important to provide a helping network that can respond effectively when students experience problems, and a system that refers to young people with significant needs to the appropriate helping resources.

NAVIGATING THE TOOLKIT

The Natural Helpers: Reimagined toolkit is an organized and easy to use toolkit available to all schools.

This program is meant to be flexible and not a rigid curriculum. This means you do not need to follow the exact ordering that is laid out and are encouraged to use the pieces that best fit the needs of your school. Not all schools have access to the same resources, and this toolkit has alternative options in case resources become a limiting factor.

The toolkit contains **8 sections**:

1. Introduction

The introduction document outlines the history, concept, roles and goals of Natural Helpers. It also provides guidance for using the toolkit.

2. Planning

The Planning section provides resources for creating a leadership team within your school, outlining a school year implementation plan for Natural Helpers, and presenting the program to school faculty.

3. Natural Helpers Selection

The Natural Helpers Selection section covers the student nomination survey, survey procedures, Natural Helper selection, supplementing the survey process, and orientation for the Natural Helpers and their families.

4. Retreat Training

The Retreat Training section includes preparation steps, a sample overnight agenda, welcome and wrap-up activities, and a resource list for songs, movies, and inspirational quotes.

5. Ongoing Training

The Ongoing Training section focuses on post-retreat check-ins with Natural Helpers and organizing schoolwide initiatives such as anti-bullying efforts and mental health awareness campaigns.



6. Lessons

The Lessons section provides various modules on self-care, enhancing school climate, supporting peers with everyday challenges, and guiding them to trusted adults for serious concerns. These lessons are adaptable for retreat sessions or ongoing training throughout the year.

7. Activities

The Activities section features team-building exercises, energizers, and icebreakers suitable for retreat training or ongoing check-ins and sessions with Natural Helpers.

8. Evaluation

The Evaluation section includes an end-of-year survey for Natural Helpers to reflect on their experiences and provide feedback to strengthen the program for the next school year.



WRITTEN PREFACE



History

In 1979, a local high school teenager died, and his girlfriend was seriously injured in a joint suicide pact. Several students at the school knew about the plan and told no one. In response to that tragedy, the beloved and committed school nurse, Jane Akita, asked for help from the health education team at the Educational Service District (ESD). She feared that other students might attempt suicide out of guilt and grief.

The ESD team consisted of a talented writer, organizer and former Peace Corps worker, Carol Mooney, and a rookie Health Education Coordinator, Clay Roberts. Together they crafted a plan that was based on a few simple beliefs. First was a belief that students know when their friends are in trouble long before school staff know. Secondly, was a belief that young people turn to friends and trusted adults for help first. This group of trusted people were named Natural Helpers. A survey was developed to identify those helpers, retreat training to build the helpers' skills, and ongoing training to support them throughout the school year.

Use of the Natural Helpers program grew, and early on it was identified by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) as a national model program. Safe and Drug Free Schools funding became available to support implementation. Roberts Fitzmahan & Associates (RFA) developed a kit of support materials and a Training of Trainers program, and the program was implemented throughout the US. The Natural Helpers program was revised in 1997 by the Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (CHEF) and support materials were sold by Altschul Group Corporation (AGC). Over the years funding went away, with materials and training no longer available to schools—though in many communities Natural Helpers continued.

It became obvious to those who developed the program that it was not the survey or the training or the support materials that were the most important variable in the success and sustainability of Natural Helpers, but who delivered the program that was most important. Over the past two decades the team focused almost exclusively on staff development.



INTRODUCTION



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OVERVIEW OF NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED

What Is It?

Natural Helpers: Reimagined is a peer support program for middle and high school students. It's based on two key ideas:

- Students often notice when their friends are struggling before adults do.
- Young people usually turn to trusted friends or adults first for help.

How It Works:

Every school has students and staff who others naturally go to for help. These trusted individuals are called Natural Helpers. This program identifies them through a schoolwide anonymous survey and gives them training and support to be even more helpful. Choose staff and student representatives after reviewing survey results to help guide your choices.

Training:

Selected Natural Helpers attend a two-day retreat where they learn skills like self-care, how to improve school culture, how to support friends, and how to refer serious issues to adults. They are not trained to be counselors or therapists, but they do meet adult referral contacts during training.

Ongoing Support:

After the retreat, Natural Helpers continue learning throughout the year. They plan school events, practice helping skills, and learn about topics like stress, cyberbullying, disordered eating, and relationships.

Program Goals:

This program has four main goals:

1. Strengthen and grow the peer support network in schools.
2. Make schools kinder, more welcoming, and inclusive.
3. Increase helpful interactions among students.
4. Help students get support earlier for serious mental health issues.

Roles of Natural Helpers:

Natural Helpers have four key roles:

1. Take care of themselves so they can help others.
2. Make the school a more welcoming and inclusive place.
3. Support friends with everyday problems.
4. Refer friends with serious problems to trusted adults.

Most of their work focuses on improving school culture and supporting peers. But they also help connect students with serious issues to adult resources early.



PLANNING



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DEVELOPING AND ORIENTING A LEADERSHIP TEAM

Goals:

- Choose a diverse and inclusive Leadership Team
- Introduce the team to the Natural Helpers program
- Work together to create a shared plan for putting the program into action.

Before You Begin:

- Aim to select 5–9 team members. Include a school counselor, teacher, support staff, a mental health professional, and a student.
- Choose staff and student representatives after reviewing survey results to help guide your choices.
- Make sure your team reflects the school's diversity – gender, roles, backgrounds, and experiences.
- Team members should:
 - Know students across different grades and groups.
 - Support using surveys to select Natural Helpers.
 - Keep things confidential.
 - Work well with others.
- Schedule your first meeting and invite potential team members individually.
- Share basic information about the program and give them handouts. Overview and Role of the Leadership Team.

First Meeting Activities:

- Welcome everyone and introduce yourself as the team leader and facilitator.
- Let each person introduce themselves and share why they want to join the team.
- Explain the Natural Helpers Program, including goals, surveys, training, ongoing support, and evaluation. Review the Overview of the Natural Helpers Reimagined document.
- Hand out and review the Role of the Leadership Team. Discuss how each member can help.

- Review and discuss the four main goals of the program.
 - Natural Helpers take care of themselves first.
 - They help make the school more welcoming and inclusive.
 - They support friends with everyday problems and stress.
 - They refer friends with serious issues to trusted adults.
- Give out the Master Plan form. Ask members to review tasks and come prepared to divide responsibilities at the next meeting.

Wrap-Up:

- Prepare materials and an agenda for the next meeting.
- Share a list of team members and a progress update with the Principal/School Board.

THE ROLE OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Leadership Team is the administrative foundation of the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program

- It promotes the program in school and in the community.
- It coordinates communication about the program.
- It assists in obtaining program funding
- It assists with preliminary task such as budgeting, developing a timeline, and setting goals.
- It assists with making major program decisions.
- It assists in administering the survey.
- It assists in tabulating the survey.
- It helps select Natural Helpers.
- It helps orient Natural Helpers and their families.
- It works to coordinate and deliver the Retreat Training.
- It works to design and deliver ongoing training.
- It helps design, collect, tabulate, and analyze evaluation data.

As members of the Natural Helpers: Reimagined Leadership Team, you may have several different roles – like facilitator, organizer, writer – based on your strengths and interests. You'll also participate in training as an adult Natural Helper. Alongside your teammates, you will help plan, run, and evaluate the program to make sure it meets its goals.

DEVELOPING A MASTER PLAN

This section outlines how to develop a comprehensive Master Plan for the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program. The purpose is to organize tasks, timelines, and responsibilities to ensure a successful and well-coordinated school year.

Preparation:

Make copies of the Master Plan form for each leadership team member. Send an email reminder to team members with the meeting details (date, time, purpose).

Planning Process:

Assign Responsibilities: Review the Master Plan form and ask for volunteers to lead each task. If no one volunteers, revisit later and assign based on skills. Individual Task Review: Each team member reviews the toolkit section related to their assigned task and creates a list of activities needed to complete the task.

Collaborative discussion:

Share individual plans with the group and provide time for questions, feedback, and input.

Finalizing the Plan:

Collect all forms and compile them into a comprehensive Master Plan. Distribute the final plan to the Principal and all Leadership Team members. Use the plan in future meetings to track progress and adjust as needed.

MASTER PLAN FORM

Use this form to identify who will lead the tasks listed below with an estimated begin and end date. Make a copy for each person in your leadership team.

Introducing the Program to the School:

- Select a date and time
- Facilitate staff orientation
- Explain the survey
- Answer questions about the program

Lead: _____

Begin date: _____

End date: _____

Conducting the Survey:

- Determine when to administer the survey
- Prepare survey materials
- Administer the survey

Lead: _____

Begin date: _____

End date: _____

Selecting the Natural Helpers:

- Tabulate survey results
- Coordinate the selection process
- Choose alternative Natural Helpers

Lead: _____

Begin date: _____

End date: _____

Orienting the Natural Helpers and Their Families:

- Facilitate orientation for prospective Natural Helpers
- Explain the Retreat Training
- Answer questions about the program

Lead: _____

Begin date: _____

End date: _____

MASTER PLAN FORM

Planning the Retreat Training:

- Reserve a site for the training
- Assemble the participants' materials
- Complete all details for the training
 - Transportation
 - Meals
 - Permission slips
- Create agenda

Lead: _____

Begin date: _____

End date: _____

Planning the Ongoing Training:

- Determine a format for Ongoing Training
- Assemble materials for student and staff Natural Helpers
- Develop student-driven content

Lead: _____

Begin date: _____

End date: _____

Planning Evaluation:

- Determine how to document important tasks and milestones throughout the year
- Develop a survey for the end-of-year evaluation
- Write evaluation report and incorporate results into next year's program

Lead: _____

Begin date: _____

End date: _____

INTRODUCING THE PROGRAM TO YOUR SCHOOL

Help school staff understand the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program. Gain staff support for administering the Natural Helpers survey.

Before the Presentation:

- Print copies of the [Natural Helpers Reimagined Overview](#) for all staff.
- Coordinate with the Principal to schedule time during a staff meeting.
- Choose a date, time, and method for conducting the Natural Helpers survey.

During the Presentation:

- Introduce the members of your Leadership Team.
- Ask staff to think of a student they've been concerned about – someone at risk of dropping out or harming themselves or others. Then explain that the student's friends likely noticed something was wrong before staff did.
- Hand out the program overview and use it to explain the key parts of the program: the survey, retreat training, and ongoing support. Highlight the importance of self-care throughout the program.
- Share the survey date and process and ask for staff cooperation.
- Explain how staff may be selected to participate based on survey results.
- Allow time for questions and discussion.

Follow-Up:

- Write a short article for the school newsletter to inform parents about the program. Use the program overview as a reference

NATURAL HELPERS SELECTION



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OVERVIEW OF THE NATURAL HELPERS SELECTION PROCESS

Choosing the right Natural Helpers is key to the success of the program. This process sets Natural Helpers: Reimagined apart from other peer support programs.

Tools Provided:

This section includes everything you need to run the survey, review the results, and choose your team of helpers. It also offers ways to add extra peer and staff helpers and share program details with students, families, and staff.

Survey Options:

You can choose from:

- Electronic surveys for middle and high school students (recommended for automatic results).
- Paper surveys for both levels (better for smaller schools).
- Staff can also be selected using the survey.

Instructions for giving the survey are included.

Choosing Natural Helpers:

Reviewing survey results and picking peer helpers takes time and care. The goal is to choose a diverse group that reflects the whole student body.

Use a team of staff who know students across grades and programs. Tools and steps are provided to help with this.

Adding Extra Helpers:

The survey should be the main way to choose Natural Helpers. However, some schools may want to let a few students apply to join. A process and screening questions are included for this option.

Orientation for Helpers and Families:

Once students and staff are selected, invite them to join the program. Make sure they understand their role and what they're committing to.

It's also important to inform parents and get their permission. Sample emails, handouts, forms, and a meeting agenda are provided to help.

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED SURVEY TEMPLATE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

This survey is a key component of the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program. Its purpose is to identify students and staff members who are trusted by their peers and often sought out for help.

The survey also gathers data on the top stressors and concerns affecting students, such as mental health, bullying, and peer pressure. This information helps guide the content of ongoing training sessions and informs schoolwide initiatives to address current needs.

NOTE: This survey can be done electronically or on paper. For electronic surveys, copy the information below into the survey software commonly used in your district (Google Forms, Kahoot, etc.)

Survey

Introduction:

We all encounter problems of some kind or another. Often, we turn to students or adults at our school for help. The goal of this survey is to identify and support these important people, who we call Natural Helpers. Think about the people you trust, those who listen well, and who are helpful and caring. These should be people you would reach out to if you had a problem.

Please take a few minutes to complete this quick survey. Your honest answers are important, and we guarantee that your responses will be confidential and anonymous.

Grade (select one):

- 6th grade
- 7th grade
- 8th grade

If I had a personal problem and I needed help, the student(s) at [ENTER SCHOOL NAME] I trust and would see out are:

Please list the first and last name of up to two students at [SCHOOL NAME].

Student 1: _____

Student 2: _____

If you had a personal problem and I needed help, the staff member(s) at [SCHOOL NAME] I would trust and talk with are:

Please list the names of up to two adult staff at [SCHOOL NAME].

Name: _____

Name: _____

Which of the following concerns cause the most stress for you or your friends and classmates at [SCHOOL NAME].

Please check up to three items.

- Achievement (grades, affecting college, career choice)
- Activities and Athletics (joining a club, trying out for a team, trying a new activity)
- Friendships (gossip, rumors, jealousy, communication, support)
- Peer Pressure (to look, feel, or act in a certain way)
- Popularity (fitting in, belonging)
- Screen Time (too much/too little, addiction to devices, social media)
- Self-image (how you see yourself)

Do you or your friends and classmates often worry about the items on this list?

Please check up to three items.

- Bullying (physical bullying, cyberbullying, or threats from others).
- Family (conflict, communication, relationships).
- Loss (separation, divorce, death).
- Money (for food, school expenses, for a place to live, getting a job).
- World issues (war, the environment, politics).
- None of the above.

Are you or your other friends and classmates at [SCHOOL NAME] feeling concerned about the items listed below?

Please check up to 3 items.

NOTE: Please speak with your parent/guardian or a trusted adult immediately if you feel overwhelmed, upset, or impacted by any of the items listed below.

- Abuse (emotional, physical, sexual, or threats of abuse).
- Disordered eating (anorexia, bulimia, obesity, compulsive eating).
- Mental health (depression, loneliness, anxiety, stress).
- Sexual behavior (sexual relations, romantic relations, birth control, sexually transmitted disease).
- Substance use (vaping, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, opioids, or other drugs)
- Suicide (thoughts of suicide, self-harm).
- Violence (threats, fights, school shootings).
- None of the above.



NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED SURVEY TEMPLATE FOR HIGH SCHOOL

This survey is a key component of the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program. Its purpose is to identify students and staff members who are trusted by their peers and often sought out for help.

The survey also gathers data on the top stressors and concerns affecting students, such as mental health, bullying, and peer pressure. This information helps guide the content of ongoing training sessions and informs schoolwide initiatives to address current needs.

NOTE: This survey can be done electronically or on paper. For electronic surveys, copy the information below into the survey software commonly used in your district (Google Forms, Kahoot, etc.)

Survey:

Introduction:

We all encounter problems of some kind or another. Often, we turn to students or adults at our school for help. The goal of this survey is to identify and support these important people, who we call Natural Helpers. Think about the people you trust, those who listen well, and who are helpful and caring. These should be people you would reach out to if you had a problem.

Please take a few minutes to complete this quick survey. Your honest answers are important, and we guarantee that your responses will be confidential and anonymous.

Grade (select one):

- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade

If I had a personal problem and I needed help, the student(s) at [ENTER SCHOOL NAME] I trust and would see out are:

Please list the first and last name of up to two students at [SCHOOL NAME].

Student 1: _____

Student 2: _____

If you had a personal problem and I needed help, the staff member(s) at [SCHOOL NAME] I would trust and talk with are:

Please list the names of up to two adult staff at [SCHOOL NAME].

Name: _____

Name: _____

Which of the following concerns cause the most stress for you or your friends and classmates at [SCHOOL NAME].

Please check up to three items.

- Achievement (grades, affecting college, career choice).
- Activities and Athletics (joining a club, trying out for a team, trying a new activity).
- Friendships (gossip, rumors, jealousy, communication, support).
- Peer Pressure (to look, feel, or act in a certain way).
- Popularity (fitting in, belonging).
- Screen Time (too much/too little, addiction to devices, social media).
- Self-image (how you see yourself).

Do you or your friends and classmates often worry about the items on this list?

Please check up to three items.

- Bullying (physical bullying, cyberbullying, or threats from others).
- Family (conflict, communication, relationships).
- Loss (separation, divorce, death).
- Money (for food, school expenses, for a place to live, getting a job).
- World issues (war, the environment, politics).
- None of the above.

Are you or your other friends and classmates at [SCHOOL NAME] feeling concerned about the items listed below?

Please check up to 3 items.

NOTE: Please speak with your parent/guardian or a trusted adult immediately if you feel overwhelmed, upset, or impacted by any of the items listed below.

- Abuse (emotional, physical, sexual, or threats of abuse).
- Disordered eating (anorexia, bulimia, obesity, compulsive eating).
- Mental health (depression, loneliness, anxiety, stress).
- Sexual behavior (sexual relations, romantic relations, birth control, sexually transmitted disease).
- Substance use (vaping, alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, opioids, or other drugs).
- Suicide (thoughts of suicide, self-harm).
- Violence (threats, fights, school shootings).
- None of the above.



ADMINISTERING THE NATURAL HELPERS SURVEY

The success of the Natural Helpers Reimagined program depends on accurately identifying students who are trusted by their peers. This guide outlines how to conduct a quick, anonymous survey to find those individuals.

Before the Survey:

- Choose a date to conduct the survey. Fall is ideal, once students have had time to connect with classmates.
- Include all students – general education, special education, and independent study – to ensure full representation.
- Try to survey all students at the same time and on the same day.
- Pick a time with high attendance, such as second period mid-week.
- Decide whether to use the paper version or an electronic version.
- Review and prepare the survey instructions ahead of time.
- Notify staff at least one week before the survey via meeting or email. A sample email is available.

Survey Instructions:

- [Instructions for administering the survey.](#)

After the Surveys:

- Make sure all surveys are collected.
- Store the survey data securely.

SAMPLE EMAIL TO STAFF

This email template is intended to inform school staff about the upcoming student survey for the Natural Helpers Reimagined program. The survey helps identify trusted students and staff who can support their peers and connect them with resources.

Dear [**Staff name**],

On [**Date**] during [**Period**], we will conduct an anonymous survey with all students. This survey is the first step in launching the Natural Helpers Reimagined program, which we are currently implementing at our school.

The program aims to identify key issues students face – such as cyberbullying, substance use, and violence – and recognize trusted individuals within our school community. These trusted students and staff may choose to receive training to support their peers and guide them to helpful resources.

The survey is essential for gathering this information. It will be administered [(**CHOOSE ONE**) on paper | electronically via (**NAME SYSTEM**)] and should take no more than 15 minutes. Detailed instructions will be shared with you soon.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out. Thank you for your support with this important initiative.

Sincerely,

[**Your Name**]

Natural Helpers Coordinator

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ADMINISTERING THE NATURAL HELPERS SURVEY

These instructions are designed to help staff guide students through the Natural Helpers survey process. The goal is to identify trusted individuals in the school community who can support their peers.

What to Say to Students:

“Everyone faces challenges from time to time. Often, people turn to classmates or adults at school for support. We call these trusted individuals Natural Helpers.

Our school is starting a program called Natural Helpers Reimagined to recognize and support these helpers.

You’ll be completing a short survey (approximately 15 minutes) to help us identify who you trust and what issues matter most to you and your friends.

Please complete the survey quietly and honestly on your own. Don’t discuss your answers with others.

Think carefully about the names you write down – these people you trust to help if you had a problem. Adults can include teachers, coaches, office staff, or any school employee.

Your answers are anonymous and confidential. We will use the results to invite selected individuals to join the Natural Helpers program. Listing someone doesn’t mean they must participate.

Any questions before we begin?”

Survey Distribution:

- If using paper surveys: Hand out the survey and ask students to wait until you say to begin.
- If using electronic surveys: Ask students to check their email for the survey link. Confirm they can access it. You may also display the link on the board or screen.

During the Survey:

Let students know they have about 15 minutes to complete the survey. Ask them to stay quiet until everyone is finished.

You may set a time, but 15 minutes is a guideline, not a strict limit.

After the Survey:

- If using paper surveys: Ask students to place their completed surveys on your desk.
- Collected all completed surveys and place them in an envelope.
- Thank students for their participation.
- Seal the envelope and send it to the office at the end of the period.



SELECTING THE NATURAL HELPERS

This guide explains how to review the survey results and choose students and staff to serve as Natural Helpers. The goal is to select individuals who are trusted by their peers and represent the diverse groups within the school.

Objectives:

- Review survey results to identify students who are frequently named.
- Ensure selected students represent all major subgroups in the school.
- Identify staff members who are frequently named in the survey.
- Determine top student concerns based on survey responses.

Before You Begin:

- Set a date, time, and location for the selection meeting.
- Invite a diverse group of staff members to help with the selection.
- Prepare a grid template on a whiteboard or large paper (see example below).
- Know how many Natural Helpers you can select based on your budget and training capacity.

Name	Mentions	Grade	Gender	Robotics	Cheer	Chess Club
John Smith	7	12	NB	✓		
Anna Belle	5	10	F		✓	
Bob Doe	12	9	M			✓

Selection Process:

1. Brainstorm student subgroups (e.g., grade levels, gender, interests) and label your grid accordingly.
2. Choose students who are named often and represent multiple subgroups.
3. Create a separate grid for staff and select a diverse group of staff members.
4. Choose alternate students and staff in case someone cannot participate.

Next Steps:

- **Contact** selected students and staff to invite them and their parents to the Orientation session.
- Make a prioritized list of student concerns from the survey data.



SUPPLEMENTING THE SURVEY SELECTION PROCESS

To offer an additional way for a small number of students to join the Natural Helpers team, even if they were not selected through the initial survey.

Preparation Steps:

The survey should be the main method for selecting Natural Helpers. However, in some cases, you may need to add students using this supplemental process.

Consider the following reasons:

- New students have shown interest in joining the program.
- Certain student groups (e.g., band, art) are missing or underrepresented in the survey results.
- Other special circumstances that may warrant additional selections.

Schedule interviews with interested students or send them an email with key questions. Choose questions that will help you make informed decisions. Let students know their answers won't be anonymous but will be kept confidential.

Suggested Screening Questions:

Question:

Why do you want to be a Natural Helper?

Explanation

This question helps us understand why the student wants to join the Natural Helpers Reimagined Program. When choosing students, try to focus on those who genuinely want to help others, not just those who are doing it for outside reasons.

Question:

Why do you want to be a Natural Helper?

Explanation

This question helps us understand why the student wants to join the Natural Helpers Reimagined Program. When choosing students, try to focus on those who genuinely want to help others, not just those who are doing it for outside reasons.

Question:

Have you been in a situation before where a friend approached you for help? Without using names, explain the situation and what you did.

Are you willing to participate in a retreat training session and attend regular monthly meetings?

Would you be open to keeping a journal about your experiences helping others, as long as the people you've helped stay anonymous?

Who are some of the groups of friends you spend time with and feel most comfortable around?

If you were feeling sad or having a tough time, what would you do?

What do you do for self-care?

If a friend told you something personal and asked you to keep it a secret, what would you do?

How likely are you to reach out to a student who seems to be struggling, even if you don't know them?

Explanation:

This question helps you see how much experience the student has with supporting their peers. While the Natural Helpers Reimagined program includes training, it's still helpful if a student has done this kind of thing before.

However, don't turn a student away just because they haven't had that experience yet

If they aren't willing to do these things, they won't be able to fully take part in the Natural Helpers Reimagined Program.

If they aren't willing to do these things, they won't be able to fully take part in the Natural Helpers Reimagined Program.

This helps you see which communities the student feels most connected to, and where they might be most effective offering support.

This question helps show how the student looks for support when they need it. Natural Helpers are encouraged to have a small group of trusted adults they can turn to.

This question helps us learn how the student takes care of themselves. Being able to care for yourself is important before you can support others. The question is open-ended on purpose to let students share in their own way.

Students need to be able to make hard choices, like telling an adult if a friend might harm themselves or others. Knowing when to get outside help even if it feels like breaking trust is an essential skill.

Natural Helpers should be willing to offer support to students across the school, regardless of whether they know each other well.



Interview Process:

Hold in-person interviews with the applicants. Based on their responses and your evaluation, decide whether to invite them to join the Natural Helpers team.

Final Steps:

Inform all students who participated in the process of your decision and explain your reasoning. Thank them for their time and interest in the program.



ORIENTING THE NATURAL HELPERS

This document is designed to help schools effectively introduce the Natural Helpers program to parents and caregivers. It provides guidance on presenting the program's purpose, benefits, and expectations, while ensuring families understand the role of Natural Helpers and the importance of their participation. The session aims to build trust and clarity, secure parent consent, and prepare students and families for the upcoming retreat and ongoing involvement in the program.

Preparation for the Session:

- Send email invitations to selected students (not alternates) and adult Natural Helpers using provided templates.
- Prepare copies of these handouts for each student: [Overview of the Natural Helpers Program](#), Developmental Assets List (page 30-32 in the Lessons document), What to Bring to the Retreat ([non-overnight](#) or [overnight](#)), and [Parent/Guardian Consent Form](#).
- Prepare copies of the [Tips for Adults Selected for the Retreat Training](#) for adult helpers.
- Invite the principal and Leadership Team to attend.
- Prepare a sign-up sheet for names, emails, and/or phone numbers of attendees (for prospective Natural Helpers).

What Participants Will Gain:

- Understand the purpose and goals of the Natural Helpers program.
- Learn the four key roles of Natural Helpers:
 - Improving school culture and climate
 - Supporting peers socially and emotionally
 - Helping with everyday problems
 - Referring peers with more serious issues to trusted adults
- Know what to expect at the retreat and the basic rules for participation.
- Recognize the Natural Helpers are not counselors but part of a helping team with clear boundaries.

Facilitating the Session:

1. Have the principal welcome attendees and introduce the Leadership Team. Distribute all handouts.
2. Explain the survey process and congratulate students for being identified as caring and trusted friends. Acknowledge parents and staff recognized through the survey.
3. Use the [Overview of the Natural Helpers Program](#) to introduce program roles and goals.

4. Clarify expectations: Natural Helpers are not junior counselors; they work within limits and as part of a team.
5. Share the need for initial and ongoing training.
6. Describe the retreat details (site, date) and review the 'What to Bring' handout.
7. Explain retreat rules: respect others, stay safe, attend all sessions, and no alcohol, vaping, or drugs.
8. Collect Parent/Guardian Consent Forms.

End with a Q&A session to address participant questions.

SAMPLE EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE STAFF

This email template is intended to inform school staff about the upcoming student survey for the Natural Helpers Reimagined program. The survey helps identify trusted students and staff who can support their peers and connect them with resources.

Dear [**STAFF NAME**],

On [**DATE**] during [**PERIOD**], we will conduct an anonymous survey with all students. This survey is the first step in launching the Natural Helpers Reimagined program, which we are currently implementing at our school.

The program aims to identify key issues students face – such as cyberbullying, substance use, and violence – and recognize trusted individuals within our school community. These trusted students and staff may choose to receive training to support their peers and guide them to helpful resources.

The survey is essential for gathering this information. It will be administered [(**CHOOSE ONE**) on paper | electronically via (**NAME SYSTEM**)] and should take no more than 15 minutes. Detailed instructions will be shared with you soon.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out. Thank you for your support with this important initiative.

Sincerely,

[**YOUR NAME**]

Natural Helpers Coordinator

SAMPLE EMAIL TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

This email template is intended to inform students that they have been identified by their peers as trusted individuals through the Natural Helpers survey. It invites them and their parent/guardian to an orientation session where they can learn more about the program, understand their role as a Natural Helper, and decide whether they would like to participate.

Dear **[STUDENT NAME]**,

Congratulations! You are one of the students whose name was listed frequently by your peers in our school's recent Natural Helpers survey. You are someone who other students feel they can trust and turn to for help with problems. Because of this, we think you would make for a great Natural Helper.

If you decide to participate in the program, you will be invited to a retreat training with other student Natural Helpers and school staff. You will also have opportunities for ongoing training throughout the school year.

Please come to the Orientation for Prospective Natural Helpers with your parent/guardian on **[DATE, TIME, PLACE]**. The purpose of the orientation is to provide you and your parents/guardians with additional information and answer your questions before you make a decision about your involvement. It provides you with an opportunity to learn more about the program and how you may contribute to it given your trusted position in the school community.

Feel free to reach out with any questions you may have. Hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

Natural Helpers Coordinator

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this document is to obtain parent or guardian consent for a student to participate in the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program. Feel free to use this on your own district's heading.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am delighted to inform you that your child, **[STUDENT'S NAME]**, has been identified through a schoolwide survey as a Natural Helper, someone other students feel they can trust and turn to for help.

Natural Helpers: Reimagined is a peer support program based on a simple premise: within every school, there is an informal helping network. We know that students seek out peers for advice, assistance, or a sympathetic ear. Natural Helpers are not counselors or therapists but serve as a support network, referring friends who need more help to appropriate adults.

The Natural Helpers: Reimagined program provides training through an initial retreat, and then with follow-up ongoing lessons for the rest of the school year. Retreat training content includes helping skills, knowing limits, how to make a referral, team building, and self-care. In addition to becoming a better support network, Natural Helpers will develop important life and leadership skills that serve them well in life, careers, and in their future relationships.

A team of adult staff members will attend the retreat and will work with the students throughout the school year. The district's code of conduct and safety regulations will be followed at all times in order to ensure students' safety and well-being during the retreat, field trips, and ongoing school activities. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact me at **[PHONE NUMBER or EMAIL]**.

We have scheduled an information meeting at school for Natural Helpers and their parents/guardians on **[DATE]**. The meeting will be held **[ROOM]** from **[TIMEFRAME]**.

Please sign this form to let us know that we have your consent for your child to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

Natural Helpers: Reimagined Program Leader

You have my permission for my child, _____, to participate in the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____



**NATURAL HELPERS
REIMAGINED**



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RETREAT TRAINING



**NATURAL HELPERS
REIMAGINED**



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NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED RETREAT TRAINING OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview of how to plan and conduct a successful retreat training for the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program. It explains the purpose of retreat training, key preparation steps, and customizable options to meet your school's needs.

Why Retreat Training:

Retreat training offers a powerful start to the Natural Helpers experience by building trust and team cohesion in a focused setting. Overnight retreats in natural environments are highly recommended, but non-overnight retreats at local venues can also achieve training goals when resources are limited.

Customizing the Training Agenda:

Define your program goals to shape the training content. Use the sample two-day agenda provided in the toolkit or create a custom agenda based on your school's needs. For example, middle schools may focus on improving school culture, while high schools may prioritize helping skills and referral processes.

When designing your own agenda, keep the goals of the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program in mind:

- To identify, support, and expand the peer helping network in schools.
- To improve the culture and climate of schools by making them kinder, more welcoming, and more inclusive.
- To improve the quality of and increase the number of helping interactions in schools.
- To intervene earlier and increase the number of peer referrals to appropriate sources for serious mental health concerns.

Why Two Days:

A minimum of two days is recommended for retreat training to allow time for trust-building, team development, and skill practice. Some schools choose three consecutive days to cover all required content, including self-care, helping skills, and referral processes.

Preparation for Training:

Key preparation steps include selecting and preparing your training team, choosing a site, identifying goals, designing an agenda, preparing participant packets, setting camp rules, and organizing supplies and materials.

Lessons and Activities for Customizing Training:

The toolkit provides lessons under four major content areas: Self-Care, Culture and Climate, Helping, and Referring. Activities include energizers, trust-building exercises, and connection activities, most with video demonstrations.

Lesson Format:

Lessons follow the Ready, Set, Go, Reflect format:

- Ready: Preparation steps before the lesson.
- Set: Objectives and introduction.
- Go: Step-by-step instructions.
- Reflect: Questions and prompts for processing this activity.

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED

PREPARING FOR THE RETREAT

This section provides guidance for planning and organizing a successful retreat training for the Natural Helpers: Reimagined program. It outlines key preparation steps, roles, and resources to ensure a smooth and impactful experience for students and adults.

NOTE: This program is meant to be flexible and not a rigid curriculum. You don't necessarily need to follow the exact ordering that is laid out, and we encourage you to use the pieces that best fit the needs of your school.

Selecting Trainers and Adult Participants:

- Choose at least two lead trainers experienced in group facilitation and social skills instruction.
- Ensure trainers are familiar with retreat lessons and approachable to students.
- All adult participants should model positive behavior, monitor students, and enforce retreat rules.
- Provide adults with [Tips for Selected Adults](#) handout.
- If one is available in the community, invite a mental health professional to present and build trust with students.

Building Your Retreat Agenda:

- Set retreat goals with your Leadership Team.
- Use the [Sample Retreat Training Agenda](#) or customize based on your program priorities.
- Assign lessons and activities to adults and peer trainers in advance.

Choosing a Retreat Venue:

It is recommended to hold a minimum of two days overnight retreat for deeper engagement. Building trust and developing a team with a diverse group takes time and building skills take practice.

Research a local camp or facility several weeks ahead of your retreat date. The facility should provide the following:

- Comfort, affordability, flexible meeting spaces, and recreational areas both indoor and outdoor.
- Confirm facility rules, emergency procedures, AV equipment, and sleeping arrangements.

Costs can often be a limiting factor for overnight retreats. It is a reasonable alternative to hold a non-overnight retreat. If doing a non-overnight retreat, it is recommended to find an offsite venue such as a local conference center, church or civic club facility. Apply similar criteria for accessibility and functionality as an overnight retreat facility.

Preparing Retreat Materials:

- Prepare participant packets with handouts, notebooks, and color-coded materials.
- Create reusable name tags.
- Make posters with welcome messages, top survey concerns, and inspirational quotes.
- Use the [Training Materials Checklist](#) to ensure all supplies are ready.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities:

Some of your participants may have a disability that may require you to adapt procedures. Try and identify any students who need accommodations during the Orientation meeting. Monitor students during sessions at the retreat and help them find alternative ways they can join the activity.

Preparing the Retreat Site:

- Arrive early to set up training areas, posters, and registration tables.
- Greet participants, distribute name tags and packets, and create a welcoming atmosphere.

You are ready! Enjoy your retreat training experience!

TIPS FOR ADULTS SELECTED FOR THE RETREAT TRAINING

This document provides guidance for adults selected to participate in the Natural Helpers Retreat Training. It outlines expectations for your role as a supportive peer rather than a teacher or parent, emphasizing collaboration, rule adherence, and active engagement with students. These tips are designed to help create a positive, inclusive environment where both adults and students learn together about being effective Natural Helpers.

1. Choose how you want the students to address you at the training (first name, last name, nickname, etc.).
2. Interact with students during meal breaks.
3. Follow the same rules as students, such as being in bed by lights out, no alcohol, etc.
4. Help reinforce rules.
5. Be an active and helpful participant and act as part of the group. Put yourself on the same level as the students.
6. Let students talk first in group settings.
7. Help keep the students (and yourself) on schedule.
8. The information is new for the students; be patient if it's a review for you.
9. Stay away from labeling other retreat members based on previous interactions and assumptions.
10. Arrive and leave with the group and attend the entire training.

Leaders are in charge of the group during the formal parts of the agenda. Other school adults and the in-school leaders are responsible for the students during free time, recreation time, mealtime, and bedtime. This may mean helping to organize activities like hikes and games.

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED TRAINING MATERIALS CHECKLIST

Below is a list of recommended materials to bring to the retreat. Make sure to also bring enough copies of handouts if you will not have access to a printer.

Suggested Supplies for Sessions:

- Laptop, as well as a backup laptop if possible
- HDMI cable and other necessary cables and charging cords
- Enough pens for all participants
- 3x5 notecards
- 5 twelve-pack of colored markers
- Post-It-Note easel pad
- Masking tape
- 20 packs of multicolored 3x5 Post-It-Notes
- Rubber bands
- Bluetooth speaker
- Music playlist
- Whistle
- 8 elastic headbands
- Phone camera and photo printer (if venue does not already have one)
- Polaroid camera and film (alternative) Box of tissues
- Object for passing around a circle (e.g., squishy ball or talking stick)
- Giant Jenga blocks
- Scissors
- Scotch tape
- Thumbtacks or pins
- Paper clips
- Flashlights
- Safety pins
- Stapler, staples, and staple remover
- Signs for sleeping areas
- Extension cord(s)

Suggested Extra Supplies:

- Feminine hygiene products
- Toothbrushes & toothpaste
- Soap
- Sleeping bags
- First-aid kit

Suggested Recreational Supplies:

- Footballs, basketballs, soccer balls
- Softballs, bats, mitts
- Volleyball & net
- Frisbees
- Playing cards
- Chess, checkers, puzzles
- Books

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED SAMPLE RETREAT TRAINING AGENDA

This sample agenda provides a structured two-day schedule for the Natural Helpers Retreat. It is designed to help program leaders plan activities that build trust, teach helping and referral skills, promote self-care, and strengthen school culture and climate. The agenda includes time slots for lessons, team-building exercises, energizers, and reflection periods to ensure a balanced and engaging experience.

Day 1 Agenda:

- 8:00 - Depart school for overnight retreat
- 9:00 - **Arrive at camp**
- 9:00–9:30 - Check in, name tags, group photo, scrolls, and place belongings in dorms.
- 10:10–10:30 - Welcome and Getting Started Activity
- 10:30–10:45 - **Break and snacks**
- 10:45–11:15 - Labeling lesson
- 11:15–11:30 - Team Building: Knots activity
- 11:30–12:00 - Self-Care: Affirmations lesson
- 12:00–12:45 - **Lunch**
- 12:45–1:00 - Trust Building: Running Free activity
- 1:00–1:30 - Self-Care: Trusted Adult lesson
- 1:30–2:00 - Culture and Climate: Asset Bing lesson
- 2:00–2:15 - **Break and snacks**
- 2:15–2:40 - Culture and Climate: Asset Jenga lesson
- 2:40–2:55 - Trust Building: Trust Circle activity
- 2:55–3:20 - Culture and Climate: Random Acts of Asset Building lesson
- 3:20–4:15 - **Free time**
- 4:15–5:00 - Helping: Recognizing a Problem lesson
- 5:00–6:00 - **Dinner**
- 6:00–6:15 - Energizer: Group Juggle activity
- 6:15–7:00 - Helping: Introduction lesson
- 7:00–8:30 - Sharing lesson
- 8:30–8:45 - Energizer: Rainstorm activity
- 8:45–10:30 - **Free time, scroll signing, movie**
- 10:30–11:00 - Get ready for bed
- 11:00 - Lights out



Day 2 Agenda:

- 8:00–8:45 - Breakfast and scroll signing
- 8:45–8:55 - Processing day 1 and Previewing day 2
- 8:55–9:15 - Connecting Before
Content: Personal Treasure Hunt lesson
- 9:15–10:00 - Helping: Practicing lesson
- 10:00–10:15 - Connecting Before
Content: Two Truths and a Lie activity
- 10:15–10:30 - **Breaks and snacks**
- 10:30–10:45 - Trust Building: Either-Or activity
- 10:45–11:30 - Referring: Referring Friends lesson, Part 1
- 11:30–12:30 - **Lunch and pre-packing**
- 12:30–12:45 - Connecting Before
Content: Line-Up activity
- 12:45–1:30 - Referring: Referring a Friend lesson, Part 2
- 1:30–1:45 - Trust Building: Trust Walk activity
- 1:45–2:15 - Walk and talk in nature, processing what's been learned
- 2:15–2:30 - **Break and snacks**
- 2:30–2:45 - Team Building: Human Spring activity
- 2:45–3:30 - Wrap up activity
- 4:00 - Pack up and leave for home
- 5:00 - Arrive back at school



HELPERS: REIMAGINED RETREAT WHAT TO BRING TO THE NATURAL TRAINING (NON-OVERNIGHT)

The purpose of this document is to provide participants with guidelines and a checklist of items to bring for the non-overnight Natural Helpers: Reimagined retreat training.

Facility:

[THIS SECTION NEEDS TO INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCATION, INCLUDING NAME OF THE CAMP OR FACILITY, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBER]

Items to Bring:

- Dress for the weather (rain, snow, heat, etc.)
- Backpack
- Raincoat/poncho
- Comfortable shoes
- Extra socks
- Waterbottle
- SPF
- Feminine hygiene

Sharing Item:

Bring an item that you want to share with the group. It should have a meaningful connection. You will be asked to explain to the group how it connects to who you are, or why it's important to you.

Additional Optional Items:

You may also bring a camera, snacks, a musical instrument, and headphones/earbuds.

Transportation:

We will leave from [LOCATION] on [DATE AND TIME] and return to the same location at [TIME].

Important Reminders:

- No alcohol, nicotine, vapes, cigarettes, or other drugs are allowed.
- No visitors are allowed at the training.
- Phones are only allowed during breaks and in emergency situations.
- Mark all important items with your name or initials.

WHAT TO BRING TO THE NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED RETREAT TRAINING (OVERNIGHT)

The purpose of this document is to provide participants with guidelines and a checklist of items to bring for an overnight Natural Helpers: Reimagined retreat training.

Facility:

[THIS SECTION NEEDS TO INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCATION, INCLUDING NAME OF THE CAMP OR FACILITY, ADDRESS, AND PHONE NUMBER]

Clothing:

Bring casual and comfortable clothes such as:

- Jeans
- T-shirts
- Socks
- Underwear
- Sweatpants
- Shorts
- Hoodies, etc.

Be prepared for colder conditions by bringing a jacket and other warm clothing layers. Make sure to wear shoes that are comfortable and suitable for hiking.

Toiletries:

Bring any supplies you would need on a multi-day trip. This includes:

- Towel
- Washcloth
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Soap
- SPF
- Feminine hygiene and other personal items

Bedding:

- Pillow
- Sleeping bag

Sharing Item:

Bring an item that you want to share with the group. It should have a meaningful connection. You will be asked to explain to the group how it connects to who you are, or why it's important to you.

Optional Items:

You may also bring a camera, flashlight, snacks, a musical instrument, and headphones/earbuds.

Baggage:

Keep baggage to a minimum - a small suitcase, duffel, or backpack is ideal.

Transportation:

We will leave from [**LOCATION**] on [**DATE AND TIME**] and return to the same location at [**TIME**].

Important Reminders:

- No alcohol, nicotine, vapes, cigarettes, or other drugs are allowed.
- No visitors are allowed at the training.
- Phones are only allowed during breaks and in emergency situations.
- Mark all important items with your name or initials.

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED RETREAT TRAINING WELCOME AND GREETING

This document provides guidance for welcoming participants and starting the Natural Helpers retreat. It outlines steps to create a positive, organized environment and ensure participants feel comfortable and engaged from the beginning.

Preparation:

- Prepare a packet of materials, pens or pencils, and a personalized name tag for each participant.
- Arrange seats in a large circle so everyone faces each other.
- Create a playlist for the retreat and play background music as participants enter.
- Provide a blank scroll and colored felt pens for each participant.
- *Recommended:* assign a staff member to take photos of participants as they arrive.
- Have the Welcome slide displayed on the screen as participants enter the training room.

Opening the Retreat:

- Welcome participants warmly and introduce yourself and co-trainers.
- Review key logistics: bathroom and meal locations, packet contents, and who to contact for emergencies or medical issues.
- Congratulate participants for being selected as Natural Helpers and emphasize that trust is earned and they were chosen by peers.
- Facilitate a brief discussion: How do you feel about being identified as someone others trust?

Program Overview:

- Share the goals of the Natural Helpers program.
- Explain the four key roles:
 - Self-Care: Building personal resilience and creating a self-care kit.
 - School Climate: Promoting inclusivity and positive culture through asset-building.
 - Peer Support and Helping: Helping friends navigate challenges using problem-solving strategies.
 - Referral Skills: Knowing limits and connecting peers to a trusted adult or professional resources.
- Review the retreat agenda, highlighting major topics, meals, breaks and free time.

Building Community:

- Collaboratively establish ground rules and community agreements.
- Document agreements on a large Post-It Note easel pad.
- Engage participants in a quick icebreaker activity. (E.g., That's Me video) to foster comfort and connection.

Ongoing Engagement:

- Encourage participants to continue getting acquainted during breaks and meals.
- Challenge them to sit with new people after each break to expand connections.

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED WRAP-UP AND RETURN TO SCHOOL

This section provides guidance for concluding the Natural Helpers: Reimagined retreat. The goal is to celebrate participants' achievements, reinforce key messages, and prepare them to return to school equipped with new skills and confidence.

Preparation:

- Make copies of the Feedback Survey (paper or electronic version) and customize if needed.
- Prepare a celebration playlist and ensure a speaker is available.
- Assign a co-trainer to take photos during the wrap-up activities.

Reflecting on the Experience:

- Facilitate a discussion to review key messages from the retreat:
 - Self-care is essential before helping others.
 - Trust is the foundation of helping relationships.
 - Listening and observing are the first steps in supporting others.
 - Helping involves skills that improve with practice.
 - Natural Helpers are part of a team and can help positively influence school culture.
 - Refer serious problems to appropriate adults and resources.
- Encourage participants to share their thoughts and feelings about the retreat.

Feedback and Evaluation:

- If choosing to do a paper evaluation, allow approximately 10 minutes for participants to complete the feedback survey.
- If choosing an electronic survey, tell the students they can complete the survey when they return to school.
- Remind students not to include their names and to submit the evaluation anonymously.

Celebration Activities:

- Organize a Reflection Circle: Participants form a circle and use a soft ball or talking stick to share their experience. Only the person holding the item speaks.
- Hold a Scroll Ceremony: Present scrolls to each participant with applause
 - Emphasize that scrolls are part of their self-care kit and should be revisited with encouragement.
- Conclude with a group photo to commemorate the experience.

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED

RETREAT EVALUATION

This survey is designed to gather feedback from participants about their experience during the Natural Helpers: Reimagined retreat. The purpose is to understand what worked well and identify areas for improvement, ensuring future retreats are even more effective. You can copy this evaluation and modify to adjust for a paper or electronic version.

Instructions:

Please complete this survey honestly. Do not include your name. If using paper, place the completed form face down in the designated spot. If using electronically, submit via the provided link.

Overall Experience

How would you rate your overall experience at the retreat? [checkbox]

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Key Learnings

What is one important thing you learned during the retreat? [text]

Activities

Which activity did you enjoy most? [text]

Confidence

After this retreat, how confident do you feel in your role as a Natural Helper? [checkbox]

- Very Confident
- Somewhat Confident
- Not Confident

Suggestions

What could we do to make the retreat better? [text]

Additional Comments

Any other thoughts or feedback? [text]

ONGOING TRAINING



**NATURAL HELPERS
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NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED

ONGOING TRAINING OVERVIEW

This document provides an overview of ongoing training for Natural Helpers. Its purpose is to explain why continued training is important, outline scheduling options, and describe the main goals of these sessions. The aim is to keep Natural Helpers supported, informed, and actively engaged in promoting a positive school environment.

Why do we have ongoing training:

The retreat gives Natural Helpers a strong start, but it's only the beginning. Ongoing training helps review what was learned and go deeper into important topics. It also lets us address issues students identified in the survey and respond to current mental health concerns in the school.

How can ongoing training be scheduled:

There are several ways to offer ongoing training:

- **As a Class:** The best option is a semester-long class for credit. This gives more time for learning, team building, and monitoring student needs.
- **Before or After School:** This can work if sessions are well-planned and at least an hour long. Keep in mind that these times may conflict with sports, clubs, or other activities.
- **Special Release Time:** You might use homeroom, study time, or rotate meeting times so students only miss class occasionally. This requires support from school staff and administration.
- We recommend at least two sessions per month, each about two hours long.

What Are the Goals of Ongoing Training:

- **Monitoring and Supporting Helpers:** Start each session with a Check-In to see how students are doing and identify any serious concerns early.
- **Review and Learn New Skills:** Go over retreat topics and add new information based on student needs. Use the provided lessons, fact sheets, and handouts.
- **Plan Schoolwide Activities:** Work on campaigns and activities that improve school culture and climate. Students should help create and share these messages.

NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED CHECK-IN GUIDE

This guide explains how to conduct a Check-In during ongoing training sessions for Natural Helpers. The purpose is to monitor student activities, identify mental health concerns early, and strengthen team connections. It provides clear steps, goals, and suggested complementary resources to support effective implementation.

Purpose of Check-In:

- Monitor Natural Helpers' activities and provide support when needed.
- Identify mental health concerns that may require adult intervention.
- Strengthen bonds and trust among Natural Helpers.

How to Prepare for a Check-In:

- Schedule a time, date, and location for the Check-In.
- Arrange substitutes if meeting during class time.
- If time allows, select a team building or connection activity to start the session.

Steps for Conducting Check-In:

1. Begin with a brief welcome and explain the purpose of the Check-In.
2. Facilitate the chosen team-building activity.
3. Invite Natural Helpers to share updates on their helping activities.
4. Listen for signs of mental health concerns and note any issues for follow-up.
5. Close with encouragement and reminders for upcoming sessions.

Suggested Complementary Documents:

- Fact Sheets and Handouts - for mental health awareness and skill building.
- Schoolwide Campaign Activities - for planning outreach and initiatives

SCHOOLWIDE CAMPAIGNS: ASK ME!

The *Ask Me!* campaign is designed to raise awareness about adolescent mental health in a creative and engaging way. By using personalized t-shirts featuring compelling statistics and the phrase “Ask Me!”, Natural Helpers spark curiosity and encourage conversations among peers. The goal is to promote early help-seeking behaviors, share accurate information, and foster a supportive school environment where mental health is openly discussed.

Preparation:

- Order plain white t-shirts in a variety of sizes, one for each Natural Helper.
- Order t-shirt paint in a variety of colors.
- Develop a list of important statistics about adolescent mental health. If your school participates in the Healthy Youth Survey, use as much of that local data as possible for this campaign. If your school does not participate in the survey, research on a district or county level.

Steps to Complete Campaign:

1. Share with the group that they will be raising awareness about mental health issues based on recent data (HYS or other local data).
2. Handout a list of adolescent mental health statistics and ask them to pick one statistic that they want their classmates to know about and have them write it down.
3. Have each Natural Helper select a plain white t-shirt in their size. They will decorate their shirt using the statistic they chose.
4. They need to include a number or a part of the statistic they have selected followed by the statement: “Ask Me!” Examples:
 - 33% of teens have experienced this, Ask Me! (bullying)
 - 21% have experienced this in the last two weeks, Ask Me! (anxiety)
 - 60% of teens don’t receive this, Ask Me! (treatment for chronic depression)
5. For the next week, Natural Helpers will wear their t-shirts at least once during the week to raise awareness about adolescents’ mental health.
6. Encourage the Natural Helpers to not only share the data with their peers, but also encourage their classmates to act, seek help, be kind, etc.
7. Define a start and end date for the campaign.

SCHOOLWIDE CAMPAIGNS: POSITIVE POST-IT DAY

The *Positive Post-It Day* campaign is designed to spread kindness and positivity throughout the school in a simple yet impactful way. By anonymously placing encouraging messages on Post-it notes in unexpected places. Natural Helpers create moments of joy and connection for their peers. This initiative promotes a culture of respect and support, helping to counter negativity and bullying while fostering a sense of belonging and community.

Preparation:

- Post-It Notes in a variety of colors
 - Enough for about 5 per Natural Helper
- Markers/Pens
- Scotch tape (in case the Post-it note doesn't stick to the wall well)
- If time and location permits, show the following video:
 - [TEDx Teen Video How to Make Positivity Stick](#)

Steps to Complete Campaign:

1. Before sharing this campaign with the Natural Helpers, share this idea with the school leadership or administration team. You will need permission to place Post-it notes around the school.
2. If given permission, share with your Natural Helpers that this is a fun activity to promote positive messages throughout the school.
3. Show the TEDx Teen Video How to Make Positivity Stick (link above).
4. To get ideas of what to write on Post-It Notes, [watch this video for inspiration](#).
5. Brainstorm together what positive messages your group would like to write.
6. Give each Natural Helper 4-5 Post-It Notes and ask them to write their message anonymously.
7. Decide as a group of several different areas around the school to post the messages (or follow the guidelines given by your school's administration).
8. On a day that is decided, have your Natural Helpers go around the school and post their notes.
9. Remind your Natural Helpers that they should do their best not to tell other students where the notes came from. This is about spreading kindness without taking recognition.

SCHOOLWIDE CAMPAIGNS: ZONES

The *Zones* campaign is designed to bring energy, fun, and positive interaction to school hallways. By creating designated “Zones” where students can choose to engage in lighthearted activities, such as giving high-fives, sharing compliments, or doing a dance move, Natural Helpers help foster a welcoming and joyful school environment. This initiative encourages connection, reduces stress, and promotes a sense of belonging during everyday transitions.

Preparation:

- Approach the idea with your school leadership team or administration. You may need permission to place tape on the hallway floors and hang posters and get additional volunteers to monitor the zones during passing periods.
- Gather poster sized butcher paper, poster board, paint/brushes, and tape that can go on (and easily be removed) from your school’s floor.

Steps to Complete Campaign:

1. Share with your Natural Helpers that this is a fun activity to promote positivity in the hallways. They will be creating Zones that staff and students can choose to enter and perform the action on the poster. Examples:
 - High-Five Zone
 - Fortnite Dance Move Zone
 - Compliment Zone
 - Fist-bump Zone
2. Brainstorm with your Natural Helpers a list of possible zones. For any dance moves you or other adults may be unfamiliar with, ask the students to demonstrate the various Zone moves. Remove any inappropriate ideas from the list.
3. Decide as a group where the Zones can be in your school. Try to choose high-traffic areas but where congestion won’t be a problem.
4. Paint a poster for each Zone that was chosen.
5. Hang the posters and place tape on the floor in front of each poster to create the Zone (4x6 feet).
 - a. There should be room to walk around the Zone because it is a choice to enter.
6. Remind Natural Helpers that it is their role to participate in and promote the Zones. Fun is contagious!

ACTIVITIES



**NATURAL HELPERS
REIMAGINED**



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ACTIVITIES: CONNECTING BEFORE CONTENT

The activities in these three sections—Connecting Before Content, Energizers, and Trust and Team-Building—are designed to create a positive, engaging environment for Natural Helpers during training and ongoing sessions. Their purpose is to help participants build relationships, stay energized, and develop trust and teamwork skills.

Connecting Before Content Activities

Purpose:

This document provides short activities (under 15 minutes) designed to help Natural Helpers build connections before diving into training content. These activities foster trust, encourage collaboration, and create a sense of belonging among participants.

Key Features:

- Icebreaker-style activities such as Do You Like Your Neighbor, Two Truths and a Lie, and Thumb Ball.
- Focus on helping participants feel comfortable and engaged early in the session.
- Includes links to video demonstrations for easy implementation.

Links To Videos:

- [Do You Like Your Neighbor?](#)
- [That's Me](#)
- [Archival Connections](#)
- [What Are Your Favorite Stories About Helping?](#)
- [Something in Common](#)
- [Line-Up](#)
- [Two Truths and a Lie](#)
- [Thumb Ball](#)
 - Will need something similar to this: [icebreaker ball](#)

ACTIVITIES: ENERGIZERS

The activities in these three sections—Connecting Before Content, Energizers, and Trust and Team-Building—are designed to create a positive, engaging environment for Natural Helpers during training and ongoing sessions. Their purpose is to help participants build relationships, stay energized, and develop trust and teamwork skills.

Energizer Activities

Purpose:

Energizers offer quick, fun activities (under 10 minutes) to re-energize participants during training and/or meetings. Energizers help maintain focus, boost morale, and strengthen team bonds.

Key Features:

- Activities like Rainstorm, Pass the Clap, and Group Juggle.
- Designed to refresh participants after breaks or long sessions.
- Includes video links for clear instructions.

Links To Videos:

- [Rainstorm](#)
- [Rainstorm \(alternate\)](#)
- [Pass the Clap](#)
- [The Numbers Game](#)
- [Mr. & Mrs. Wright](#)
 - [Mr. & Mrs. Wright step version stories](#)
- [Mingle](#)
- [Group Juggle](#)
- [Mind Meld](#)
- [Elephants](#)

ACTIVITIES: TRUST AND TEAM BUILDING

The activities in these three sections—Connecting Before Content, Energizers, and Trust and Team-Building—are designed to create a positive, engaging environment for Natural Helpers during training and ongoing sessions. Their purpose is to help participants build relationships, stay energized, and develop trust and teamwork skills.

Trust and Team Building

Purpose:

Trust and Team Building outlines activities (less than 15 minutes) that build trust and teamwork among Natural Helpers. These exercises help participants feel more comfortable working together and improve communication skills.

Key Features:

- Activities such as *Human Knot Challenge*, *Blind Guiding*, and *Trust Circle*.
- Emphasizes collaboration and mutual support.
- Provides video resources for guidance.

Links To Videos:

- [Human Knot Challenge](#)
- [Minefield](#)
- [Snakes](#)
- [Human Spring](#)
- [Blind Guiding](#)
- [Trust Circle](#)
- [Either/Or](#)
- [Running Free](#)

EVALUATION



**NATURAL HELPERS
REIMAGINED**



Washington Office of Superintendent of
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NATURAL HELPERS: REIMAGINED END-OF-YEAR EVALUATION

This section provides an end-of-year evaluation for students who served as Natural Helpers. The purpose is to reflect on their experiences, gather feedback on what worked and what didn't, and identify improvements for the future. You can copy this evaluation and modify to adjust for a paper or electronic version.

Instructions: Please complete this survey honestly. Do not include your name. If using paper, write your responses on the lines provided. If using electronically, submit via the provided link.

Overall Experience as a Natural Helper [checkbox]

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

What worked well during your time as a Natural Helper? [text]

What didn't work or was challenging? [text]

What improvements would you like to see in the program? [text]

If nominated again, would you want to be a Natural Helper? [checkbox]

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Share a story about a student you helped (without giving names) [text]

What is the most valuable lesson you learned as a Natural Helper? [text]