

TEEN NIGHT OUT



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RESOURCES

TEEN NIGHT OUT

Teen Night Out (TNO) is a social/recreational program for teens with learning or developmental disabilities. TNO provides:

- An opportunity for teens to socialize with their peers outside of the school environment.
- An opportunity for parents to connect and get information about community activities and transition services
- An opportunity for youth to separate from parents in a safe, risk-free environment

TNO has been used successfully in large and small rural communities and is a model that you can try in your community. Why not read more about it.

TNO OVERVIEW

TNO started in 2003 in a rural community in ND. It has since expanded to four frontier communities under different names but with a similar focus.

A TNO program provides after-school or evening social and recreational activities for teens with learning and developmental disabilities. Activities are planned to help teens and families:

- Become aware of recreation activities to enjoy in their area
- Spend time with peers who do not have disabilities
- Learn how to fit in and get along with other teens in a social setting
- Plan and solve problems
- Be active and fit
- Learn social skills that they will use throughout their lives

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OVERVIEW

All families are welcome in a TNO program. It is specifically designed to welcome teens and families that:

- Don't have much money to spend on extras
- May not have a reliable form of transportation
- Haven't met other parents much or feel isolated
- Don't use technology or have a lot of resources
- May not read or write as well as they would like
- Aren't sure what is out there
- Want to protect their child from unnecessary risks
- Want to be part of something fun and help their kids

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TYPICAL SESSION

Larger rural communities

- Come with parents, a sibling or caregiver, or catch a ride with staff or a mentor.
- Arrive at 5:30 PM
- Hang out and visit with mentors/friends
- Enjoy a cafeteria style home cooked meal with other teens and parents
- Listen to announcements
- Join a planned activity such as line dancing, outdoor games, make-over's, board games, ping-pong, basketball etc.
- Listen to a speaker as a group (dating, abuse, safety) or separately (parent topic)
- Help with cleanup
- Say good-bye to friends and mentors
- Go home at 7:00 PM

Smaller rural communities

- Stay after school or ride a bus to get to the TNO center
- Arrive at 3:30 PM
- Listen to announcements
- Join a planned activity such as line dancing, outdoor games, make-over's, board games, ping-pong, basketball etc
- Listen to a speaker as a group (dating, abuse, safety)
- Enjoy a short snack or meal
- Say good-bye to friends and mentors
- Go home at 5:30 PM

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OUTCOMES

TEENS - Most teens that come have difficulty with these skills at first but gradually make progress and gain confidence over time

- Use good hygiene to get to participate
- Learn how to self-manage at the event
- Try different recreational activities
- Participate without a parent in the room
- Gain confidence and self-reliance
- Learn about healthy relationships
- Start doing activities on their own
- Use positive ways to solve problems
- Enjoy themselves and have a good time
- Connect and feel like part of the group

PARENTS - Most parents that come are unsure of what to expect but gradually start coming more often or find other ways to contribute

- Meet and get to know other parents
- Bring up topics that concern them
- Help their child separate and gain confidence
- Learn what other parents are doing
- Find out more about the community
- Learn what to expect after high school
- Have a better feeling about the school
- Meet & visit with adult service providers
- Feel less alone and feel accepted as a parent
- Start contributing to the program
- Spread the word to other families

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WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT TNO

Students	Teachers	Families
<p>“This is so much fun, you are going to love it here.”</p> <p>“It’s my night mom, I don’t need you there, these are my friends.”</p> <p>“We played basketball with Chad and Megan.”</p> <p>“Judy is the best cook!”</p> <p>BACK</p>	<p>“He is really motivated to get his work done for TNO”</p> <p>“I can’t believe the changes I’ve seen in her since she started going.”</p> <p>“I think this program was exactly what we needed for these kids.”</p>	<p>“ Her brothers & sisters were always busy but the phone never rang for our youngest daughter. Well now it does.”</p> <p>“ I really like the speakers they have for parents. We get really good information.”</p> <p>“My son has just grown so much in this program. We look forward to it too.”</p>

These comments were provided by actual participants as part of an annual evaluation & planning session held at the Minot, ND TNO program in January of 2009.

REMOTE RURAL PROGRAMS

- Teen Night Out is a general name for the program - other names can be used.
- KEEP stands for Kids, Educate, Experience, Participate. The KEEP program is held in three small rural communities with students from 9 schools.
- Programs are held after school (3:30 to 5:30 PM) to take advantage of school-based transportation because of the rural distances.
- Many parents are working and cannot attend. Instead a special parent night is held twice a year. Students plan the event and prepare a meal. Speakers provide information and take home materials.
- Each site meets 2 x a month and activities include an educational topic, social time and a meal at the end.
- Mentors are recruited from students looking for leadership opportunities who are not involved in a sport or other school club.

PLANNING

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Call all participants to remind them of the time, place and plans a few days before the event•Call all mentors – let them know if they will be needed, discuss what they will be doing•Shop for, prepare and cook a meal•Arrange for transportation as needed•Recruit speakers, obtain materials <p>BACK</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Decide who will oversee which activities•Involve students, mentors and families in events•Make certain the building is unlocked and locked•Greet, welcome and thank any speakers•Pass out materials and meals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Clean- Up Crew•Debrief•Follow up with students•Follow up with families•Plan activities for the next session

TNO & TRANSPORTATION

Finding transportation to a TNO event is one of the biggest challenges in rural communities. The TNO programs in Minot, Bottineau and other communities have used the following methods.

- Parents
- Mentors
- Teachers
- School bus
- Volunteers
- City bus

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FAQ

Q How much does TNO cost families/students?

A Nothing, the program is provided free-of charge to students and families.

Q What are some ways that families can help with the TNO program?

A Families help by offering to help cook the meal, clean-up, bring treats, give rides, make materials, find speakers, write grants or letters of support. A few families make donations.

Q Is it necessary to serve a meal at the program?

A A TNO program can be run without a meal. Sometimes it is. However the meal or at least a snack is important. Some families without means only permit a son or daughter to attend in the beginning when a free meal is offered. Other families are tired at the end of the day. By the time they get home and fix a meal they are not going out for anything else. If a meal is offered, they can just make it an after work event.

Q Is it necessary to have mentors? Couldn't we do this with teacher's and para-educators?

A People who have implemented a TNO with and without mentors would always choose to have mentors whenever possible. Mentors make activities fun, they help young people with disabilities experience a sense of belonging to their communities, they model behaviors that teachers cannot always duplicate and they are a draw for many families.

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FAQ

Q Can we hold a TNO program at the high school?

A We recommend that the program be held elsewhere. Although a school-based program can work, after a full day, students are looking to get *away* from school. They prefer an informal setting that is accessible and can serve as a teen hangout. This can be located in a church, a community center or even a head start building. Look around your community. See what is safe, available, affordable and attractive to teens and parents.

Q Who is liable if someone is injured?

A Most schools are already providing community-based training. Talk with an administrator and make certain the program is covered under existing policies. If you decide to run a community based program, talk to the host of the center where activities will take place and see if they have general coverage. If necessary, consider having families sign a release form.

Q Do parents need to accompany a youth to the TNO program?

A Some youth can manage within the activity on their own. Others need the supervision of a parent or caregiver. It is the responsibility of the program coordinator to visit with each family about the student's need for supervision and to agree on a plan prior to participation.

FAQ

Q How do you get people to come to the TNO program?

A We make each evening as FUN as possible. We plan the event for a time and day that works best for MOST families. We serve food. We keep the time short (1.5 hours) to hold attention, we rely on word of mouth and start small.

Q How do you handle behavior problems?

A We welcome students and make certain they get the support they need to be successful. This may include visiting with a student or parent together, putting together a behavioral contract or limiting a student from coming unless appropriate hygiene or social behaviors are demonstrated. We work with the IEP team as needed to help students learn good behavior.

Q What is the biggest challenge to running a TNO program?

A Flexibility is the biggest requirement for running a smooth TNO program. You may begin with one kind of program in mind but the program will grow in a way that meets the true needs of students and families. Too much control and people stop coming. Too little control and the program is chaotic.

PROGRAM START-UP

- **DECIDE IF THERE IS A NEED** – Meet with families, students, teachers and administrators. Decide if there is a need in your area. Are youth connected to activities? Do they make plans and join other teens in group events? Are teens becoming sexually active without safety? Are teens staying home because they lack social skills or opportunities? Are parents isolated and in need of information? Who might benefit and why? What is the justification for the program.
- **UNDERSTAND THE CONNECTION WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION AND TRANSITION**—A social recreation program can lead to achievement of educational outcomes for teens with disabilities by providing motivation, opportunities for learning and a chance to practice. A TNO program can help your school provide related services in a cost effective way. A TNO program may improve parent involvement and build community partnerships with transition providers, employers and other partners. A TNO can assist families in following through with transition planning.
- **FIND A CHAMPION** – Who is interested in starting up a program? Who has the skills and talent to motivate and reach mentors, teachers, students, partners? Is this a natural match for someone's current job duties? Could the work be shared among two people? Who has the trust and confidence or potential funders?

START UP CONTINUED

- **FIND SPONSORS** - Successful TNO programs may have several types of sponsors.
Administrative: Decide early on if the people supervising the program will be paid (recommended), by whom and how? What policies will be set by your planning team – who will be given or has the authority to run this kind of program. Also think about who will act as a fiscal agent for the project. Who will cut a check when funds are spent or donated? **Host:** Where will the activities take place or be hosted? **Community:** Finally think about **community sponsors**? What can churches, stores and other businesses contribute?
- **PROMOTION & RECRUITMENT** - Once you decide to start a program and have found a sponsor, host and funding, you will be ready to start recruiting students, mentors, & families and promoting your program to teachers, providers and businesses. These two activities seem to happen at the same time and life can take on a chicken and the egg quality. Construct a simple one page who, what, when, where, how, & why flyer in simple language to announce the program. Make lists of potential groups who might refer students to the program. Plan to start with a small group of students at first and let word of mouth help you with growth. Be sure to recruit enough mentors and volunteers to help you with the size of group you plan to host. In general, you will want one mentor for every 3-5 students and some students may need 1-1 support.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Each TNO project needs to establish its own policies or rules to guide participants and mentors as well as any paid or volunteer staff. Rules should be reviewed at the beginning of the year. A copy of the rules can be sent home for a parent signature. Examples of some rules that have been used in other programs are listed below.

- Teens must arrive with clean, neatly combed hair, washed, shaved and wearing deodorant with clean clothes and wearing a shirt and shoes.
- Mentors are assigned to one individual or a small group and must carry a cell phone so that they can contact the program coordinator at all times.
- Food is provided for one teen and one adult or caregiver for each family. Enough food for one serving only will be provided.
- Each participant is responsible for transportation to and from the TNO activity. If you need help with rides contact the program coordinator.
- Teens will be supervised at all times during planned events.

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START UP COSTS

Costs will vary depending on the kind of TNO program you plan. The list below can give you some ideas of costs. From there you can think about what funding you will need.

- Staff**
 - Include driving time, planning, contacts and group meetings x the number of events per year. Contract for staff to supervise X number of events for a set fee. Fees can range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 per year.
- Meals**
 - Budget \$6.00 per meal per event (movies, bowling, picnics, etc.) per student, mentor, parent participant
- Outings**
 - Budget \$7.50 per activity per student, mentor or parent participant. Some parents will pay.
- Mileage**
 - Budget 41 cents per mile x the number of miles per event, x the number of trips per month
- Presenter**
 - Most presenters volunteer their time but be certain to consider extra costs if a presenter needs a meal or reimbursement for driving
- Hygiene kits**
 - Budget 15 dollars for a simple kit including comb, shampoo, disposable razors, shaving gel, hand lotion, toothbrush and toothpaste for those students that may need one and whose families are unable to provide these items.

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COST SAVING IDEAS

- **Volunteers** – Make a jobs list and sign up parent or community volunteers to complete certain tasks. We recommend paying staff to provide the program as the most reliable method for making sure things get done.
- **Community sponsors** – Make a simple brochure that outlines the program and how community sponsors can help. Include photos and stories of how families benefit. Sponsors can donate items for a hygiene kit, donate food for meals or supplies or tickets for an activity as well as serve as a presenter for an event.
- **School sponsors** – May provide funding to pay staff to operate the program. Can provide insurance or even help with the cost of transportation. School staff may recruit speakers or offer to help.
- **Mentors** – Mentors can assist with transportation (with parent permission), help to fix a meal, supervise a small group activity, model appropriate behavior, help with set up and clean up and prepare welcome signs, calendars (each family is given a calendar at the beginning of the year) and assemble thank-you gifts for presenters.
- **Parents** – Parents may assist with transportation, provide general supervision, bring treats, model appropriate behavior and reduce isolation by connecting with other families.
- **Meals** – We have found that studying the local sales adds for the grocery store and building the meal around whatever is on sale is the most cost effective way of providing a meal.

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RECRUITING

Mentors

- High school leadership clubs (e.g. faith-based or key clubs, student council, FFA, etc).
- Faith-based confirmation groups – many different churches or houses of worship require teens to complete community service
- High school guidance or career counselors – many teens not enrolled in sports are looking for a leadership opportunity.
- University or community college programs – students from nursing, speech, special education, psychology.

Students

- High School special education programs
- Word of mouth
- Churches

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ACTIVITIES

Examples of Parent Speaker Topics

- Safety
- Guardianship
- Helping out at home
- Independent living
- Sexuality and boundaries
- Going to college
- Fitness programs
- Dieting
- Behavior problems
- Employment programs
- Sibling Support
- Gadgets that work
- Social Security
- Going to the prom
- Graduation
- The military
- Community recreation
- Routines that work
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Parent Training and Information Center (Pathfinders)
- Health care & going to the doctor
- DD Case Management

Examples of Student Activities or Speaker Topics

- Make-over or fashion show
- Line dancing
- Outdoor games (egg toss in a plastic bag, blanket volleyball).
- Movie night
- Bowling (or Wii)
- Game night
- Making treats for bingo at the nursing home
- Miniature golf
- Picnics in the park
- Basketball
- Teen dance
- Pizza night with pool and pingpoing
- Speakers (Hygiene, dating, safety, healthy relationships, employment, drivers education, positive attitudes, canners, etc)

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EVALUATION

Resources for funding a program can come from any of the following resources

- State DD Council Grant
- DPI grants
- Special Education Program
- Student CEC fundraiser
- Community fundraisers
- Otto Bremer Foundation
- Community Foundation

It is best to begin by obtaining funding for a pilot with a small group and then looking for a permanent funding source.

Ways to evaluate the impact of the program will be dictated by the funders

- Student survey
- Parent survey
- Third party observations
- Trends in participation
- Pre/post skill assessment
- Group assessment of quality

Think about what will be meaningful to participants and the time and energy you have to give to evaluation.

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