



Peer Educator Profile

GUYANA INITIATIVE



NAME: Caitlin

YEAR: 4th Year Biology Major

LOCATION: Berbice, Guyana

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A PEER EDUCATOR

DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR: After PEs are hired in the fall, we begin to take on a variety of tasks to help better prepare ourselves for Initiative. At our weekly meetings, we focus on topics such as cultural sensitivity, and we learn about relevant current events in Guyana by discussing different articles from Kaieteur News. Our IDs facilitate discussions to help us learn more about experiences in Guyana, and prepare us to teach our health curriculum to a variety of diverse students ranging from grade 6 to 11. During these meetings we put an emphasis on discussing topics around mental health and mental illness, which is one of the focuses of our initiative. Additionally, we learn about different teaching methods, and practice our adaptability in the classroom by teaching mock lessons to each other. We also attend weekly education sessions with the other QHO initiatives, in which we further delve into topics pertinent to teaching in diverse communities. In addition to these weekly commitments, we often are planning and attending various fundraisers that are either QHO-wide or our own initiative specific fundraisers. As a PE on the Guyana Initiative, you can expect a time commitment of anywhere from 4-15 hours per week during the school year.



ON INITIATIVE: The Guyana Initiative has two locations, Berbice and Georgetown, and the eight hired PEs are placed at one location. Myself, along with three wonderful PEs, spent eight weeks in Berbice. Berbice is a rural region in Guyana, and we stayed in a community called Letter Kenny. During a typical week we would teach 3 to 4 lessons a day in various schools in the Berbice region. We focused on teaching mental health and mental illness, and we also had lessons on sexual health, self esteem, and peer pressure. We taught our lessons to students in grade 6 to 11. We also had the opportunity to speak at parent teaching meetings to introduce ourselves to

the parents and facilitate discussions around mental health and mental illness. After school we would prepare for our next classes by reviewing questions that our students asked in our anonymous question box that we end each lesson with. Additionally, after class we spent two hours with community members at the Letter Kenny Youth Space, which was an amazing opportunity for us to learn more about Guyanese culture. Our weekends were generally spent planning our lessons for the following week, catching up on paperwork, and talking to our peers at the Youth Space.



WHAT WE TEACH:

As part of the Guyana Initiative, our primary focus is on mental health as this is the topic that we feel is most relevant and needed by the communities that we teach in. We were in two groups of four in the two locations in Guyana, and we always taught in pairs. In addition to mental health and mental illness, some other topics we talked about were sexual health (puberty, consent, contraceptives, STIs) and substance use and abuse. Before our first lesson at each school, we had a meeting with the headmaster so that they could let us know what they thought their students would benefit the most from. Throughout initiative we often spoke with community members about their thoughts on each topic to get their input and to see if there were any other important points that should be included in our lessons.

AN IDEAL PE:

Life in Guyana is a very unique experience, and plans can change quickly as a PE. Being open minded and adaptable would be key qualities for a PE to be well suited for the Guyana Initiative. Additionally, being passionate about global health and open to learning from those around you: whether it is from the students, community members, or fellow PEs would make someone a good fit.

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN QHO:

QHO is a unique organization that allows PEs to get involved in all different facets of peer-to-peer health education. By spending the school year fundraising, learning about cultural sensitivity, and preparing to teach the curriculum, I felt prepared and very excited for my Initiative. Being part of QHO has been an amazing experience that has helped shape me as a person, and I would encourage anyone who has a passion for health, youth, and education to apply! My time in Berbice is an experience that I will never forget and that holds a very special place in my heart. I am so grateful for all of the connections that I had the opportunity to make with the students, school faculty, community members, and my fellow PEs.

