



TAG in Action: Chicago's Citywide Adolescent Health Efforts

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health, Think, Act, GrowSM (TAG)**, the Office of Adolescent Health, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

The Goal

In an effort to reach more teens across the city, the Chicago Public School (CPS) and the Chicago Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Office of Adolescents and School Health partnered to develop public awareness campaigns and programs that would complement their existing, evidence-based Teen Outreach Program[®] (TOP) model.

The Game Plan

Building upon the classroom and community service learning components of TOP, CDPH created a cross-functional collaboration with experts in other disciplines to develop:

- The city-wide Action Plan for Healthy Adolescents which identifies 40 measurable health targets as well as 65 strategies that will be implemented by CDPH and its partners;
- The Condom Availability Program, which makes free condoms available at participating public high schools and school-based health centers and includes complimentary mobile health apps to connect students to health resources;
- Innovative public awareness campaigns; and
- A teen health hotline.

Youth were involved throughout the process as designers, authors, illustrators, and copywriters. For the Condom Availability Program, student designers from Columbia College worked with teens to design and manufacture custom condom dispensers, which are now installed in more than 70 participating public high schools. The idea for Teen Health Agents, who are trusted peers who can deliver health information and resources, was inspired by a teen who took the free condoms languishing in a school health office and successfully sold them to friends. Youth were also instrumental in the development of public awareness campaigns, including "Unexpected?" which challenged gender stereotypes by depicting pregnant boys, and "Chicago Wears Condoms," which makes use of the city's iconic architecture to deliver playful prevention messages.

The Winning Plays

Chicago knew that youth are essential partners in improving health outcomes for teens, and learned a few lessons, including:

- Know your audience (P.S. It's not you).
- Ideas are not enough; you have to execute or build the team that can.
- Solutions already exist, just not where you think.
- Tokenize youth at your peril. They are not the objects of your work, they are your partners!

Learn More

Chicago Department of Public Health
<http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdph.html>
<http://chicagowearscondoms.com>

