



TAG in Action: Houston Teen Community Health Workers

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

The Goal

The Houston Health Department Office of Adolescent Health Services' Teen Community Health Worker program teaches youth about adolescent health resources and risks and how to share health information with their families, communities, and schools.

The Game Plan

Created in Houston, the Teen Community Health Worker program model is derived from the Texas state-certified adult Community Health Worker (CHW) training program. Teens age 13-17 complete a modified version of the CHW curriculum and focus on health concerns that are prevalent among adolescents and common in their communities. The teenagers who complete the program accumulate 40 hours of CHW training, which they can apply to the adult CHW certification program if they are interested in becoming state-certified community health workers at age 18.

Throughout the program, youth learn about traditional health topics such as sexual health and physical activity/nutrition, and less traditional topics including juvenile delinquency, motor vehicle safety, and the social determinants of health. The program also equips the Teen Community Health Workers with skills such as navigating the healthcare system, cultural competency, and locating community resources. Teens involved in the program are expected to relay the information they learn within their homes, schools, and communities. For example, teens set up informational tables in school cafeterias and participate in health fairs and adolescent conferences.

The Winning Plays

The majority of topics covered during the program are topics that teens care about but are not taught during traditional health classes in schools. The program answers questions that teen participants are often afraid to ask parents and teachers, dispels many common misbeliefs, and minimizes the stigma around certain health topics. Kim Williams, Division Manager, noted "this program promotes a strengths-based view of adolescents. We help young people take responsibility for their own health and for promoting healthy communities. Youth are uniquely positioned to be influencers. There is just so much capacity among youth to communicate with their peers. It's amazing to think about unleashing their power."

Learn More

City of Houston Health Department
Division of Adolescent Services
www.4youthvoice.org

