



TAG in Action: Peer Health Exchange

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

Peer Health Exchange empowers young people in under-resourced high schools with the knowledge, skills and resources they need to make healthy decisions.

The Game Plan

Peer Health Exchange (PHE) trains college volunteers to deliver health education in under-resourced high schools across the country. PHE volunteers utilize a thirteen-week curriculum that aligns with national health and education standards, and is designed to help adolescents learn essential health information and develop critical decision-making skills. PHE's goal is to improve sexual and mental health outcomes and decrease substance abuse while working alongside partners to advance health equity for young people.

Since its inception in 2003, PHE has trained more than 8,500 college student volunteers and provided health education to more than 100,000 public high school students in New York City, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Washington, DC. A recent external, quasi-experimental evaluation found that the PHE program has a statistically significant effect on students' sexual and mental health knowledge and skills. After participating in the program, students were also more likely to engage in help-seeking behaviors such as talking to an adult, having conversations about their health, and using a health center.

As part of the evaluation, PHE tested the impact of augmenting their program with a tour of a school-based health center. The study found that youth who received the tour were nearly twice as likely to later use a health center. PHE is now planning to partner with more school- and community-based health centers so that young people can learn first hand where and how to get health services.

The Winning Plays

Louisa Brown, PHE's Director of Communications, shared that "[o]ur near-peer model, coupled with our skills-based curriculum, is what makes PHE's approach work. Our college-age health educators are close enough in age to relate to what young people are going through and become a trusted source of information. They also work with young people on developing specific skills around decision-making, communication, self-advocacy and accessing resources. Our health educators focus on empowering young people rather than just sharing information."

Learn More

Peer Health Exchange
<http://www.peerhealthexchange.org/>

