

ADOLESCENT HEALTH INITIATIVE

CREATING & SUSTAINING A THRIVING YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL



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THE YAC PROJECT



With support from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), the Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI) at Michigan Medicine sought to create a guidebook on best practices for developing and maintaining a YAC within school-based and school-linked health centers. With this goal in mind, AHI convened the Youth Advisory Coalition of Youth Advisory Councils (YAC YAC), consisting of six YACs from across the state of Michigan:

- Youth Advisory Council, Regional Alliance for Healthy Schools Health Center at Lincoln High School - Ypsilanti
- Youth Leadership Council, The Corner Health Center - Ypsilanti
- Youth Advisory Council, Henry Ford Health Center at Mumford High School - Detroit
- Youth Advisory Council, The Hornet Health Center at Pellston High School - Pellston
- Teen Advisory Council, Health Delivery, Inc. Health Center at Saginaw High School - Saginaw
- Teen Advisory Council, Health Delivery, Inc. Health Center at Arthur Hill High School - Saginaw

THIS MANUAL WAS UPDATED IN 2018 BY REACHING OUT TO PREVIOUS YACS FOR UPDATED MATERIALS AND PICTURES.

Each month for a total of five months, youth collectively completed worksheets with prompts corresponding to what would become the chapters of this manual. With the exception of information regarding budgets, staff time, and information about the inception of each YAC, which was all provided by YAC coordinators, all content in this manual was directly provided by youth.

The purpose of this manual is to present a collection of strategies that address some of the most common challenges in creating a YAC and keeping it going strong, specifically in the context of school-based and school-linked health centers (although most of the information applies to YACs anywhere.) AHI has compiled this information from the people who are in the trenches – in this case, the coordinators and youth from our dedicated YAC sites – in a way we hope will equip people with real-life ideas and experiences that can help them to grow and strengthen their YACs.

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For information or to request permissions, please contact the Adolescent Health Initiative at:
2025 Traverwood Drive, Suite A6, Ann Arbor, MI, 48105.
Phone: 734-998-1588. Email: adolescenthealth@umich.edu.

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU TO THE YAC YAC MEMBERS AND COORDINATORS WHO MADE THIS MANUAL POSSIBLE!

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL YAC

Alberta Johnson, Ariel Bronkowski, Ashley O'Bonner, Ashlynn Colegrave, Chance Bonam, Courtney Battle, Danny Rogers, David Richardson, Eshara Johnson, Georgina Tull, Jazmin Edwards, Josh Cornett, Marissa Colegrove, Taylor Cherry
YAC Coordinator: Kirby Paterson

THE CORNER HEALTH CENTER YLC

Brianna Williams, Desiree Trim, Josh Cornett, Justin Snyder, Katheryne Messer, Kiristen Hubbard, Max Abuelsamid, Nathaniel Lilly, Zeaira Chestang
YLC Coordinator: Monique Selimos

MUMFORD HIGH SCHOOL YAC

Cache Poindexter, Dohovan Smith, Elexus Spencer, Emani Brown, Jaila Stallworth, Jailyn Tillman, Kayla Jackson, Kennitha Savage, Shantique Oliver, Triauna Bennett
YAC Coordinator: Natalie Kennaw

PELLSTON HIGH SCHOOL YAC

Breah Carter, Brittany Post, Cassidy Thayer, Devon Anderson, Evon Briggs, Hanah Carter, Kali Fyke, Leanne Farkas, Megan Kolodgy, Megan Milbrandt
YAC Coordinator: Natalie Kasiborski

SAGINAW HIGH SCHOOL TAC

John Jenkins III, Carni Applegate, Amber Perez, Janaisia Baker, Ruby Lee Vann, Shaynise Buyck, Juannina Wilkins, Shardavia Holmes, Amber Martin, Angelic Brooks, Anquinette Fayson, Ashlee Washington, Brianna Williams, Dahna Deloach, Darshika Sanders, Ernest Moore, Jameal Merrill, Jazsmine Bland, Na'tasha Walker, Orianna Robertson, Stephan Clay, Tamyia Ellis, William Brown Jr, Zeavon Thompson, Derike Murrell, Larry Goodman, ShDay Washington, Alexis Booker, Devaughneisha Bodiford, Kiana Riley, Nautica Adams, Stevii Dallas-Coleman, Alexis Harris, Asahni Eichelberger, Ben Rosas, D'Nesha Peete, Damion Taylor, Freddierika Prince, Jamaica Simmons, Trevaundre Evans, Zahria Williams
TAC Coordinator: Amanda Forsmark

ARTHUR HILL HIGH SCHOOL TAC

Arneshia West, Brittani Russell, Brittney Anklam, Brittney Taylor, Briyanna Simms, Ceria Barnes-Wallace, Chin Lee, Christian Meacham, Christopher Flores, Clara Bryant, Danyelle Mosqueda, Devaughnta Bodiford, Donald Pippins, Dynasty Johnson, Emily Gobeski, Flora Conley, Gabriel Pantoja, Gabriella Gomez, Hailey Visnaw, Iquanasha Walker, Isaiah Skelton, Jael Jones, Jasmine Colier, Jessica Page, Jordan Baker, Juan Rosas, Kamilah Freeman, Lia Mauricio, Marbella Lambert, Miranda Barrientos, Rachel Skelton, Salena Salinas, Sharmayne Hollis, Stephanie Velez, Todd Ray, Trayvon James, Ty'Riauna Simmons, Ysabel Rodriguez
TAC Coordinator: Kai Wright

WHY IS YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?

"If you had a problem in the black community and you brought in a group of white people to discuss how to solve it, almost nobody would take that panel seriously. In fact, there'd probably be a public outcry. It would be the same for women's issues or gay issues, but every day, in local arenas all the way to the White House, adults sit around and decide what problems youth have and what youth need without ever consulting us."

—Jason, 17,
Member of Youth Force, NYC

IN THE PAST DECADES,

the norm for youth-serving organizations (including most schools and health centers) has been to operate with little to no youth input regarding organizational decision-making. In school-based health centers (SBHCs), health care professionals have worked diligently to determine services, set policy, design exam and waiting rooms, and promote services among student populations, sometimes with youth input but often without. They are guided by state and federal laws, standards of care, policies, and sound data, and have done their best to meet the needs of the young people they serve.

But as health care professionals, we can do better. Even SBHCs that have existing YACs can find more ways to increase the level of youth engagement so that we are truly optimizing the quality of the services we offer while at the same time enhancing the development of our students. When we operationalize youth input through continual, active, and authentic engagement – ideally in the form of YACs – we are being truly patient-centered.

The Institute of Medicine defines patient-centered care as, “providing care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, and values ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions.”¹ Developing and maintaining high functioning YACs is the best way to ensure that our school-based and school-linked health centers have the youth expert input they need to meet the needs of every student.

It is important to note that youth engagement does not come without its challenges. Youth councils can be hard

to start up, and harder still to sustain. Many adults who work with young people find it challenging to keep youth “coming back.” Fortunately, listening to young people themselves can help us keep youth interested, challenged, and prepared for the next stage of their lives.

When adults believe in the capacity of young people and create opportunities for them to lead, young people engage: they feel valued and believe they’re an important part of their council, so they show up and speak up; they practice new skills and gain confidence so they can maximize their potential. In this spirit, this manual was assembled as a guide to develop and maintain a thriving YAC in ways that maximize youth engagement.

¹ Institute of Medicine (IOM). 2001. Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century. Washington, D.C: National Academy.



To ensure that you can best achieve these 5 core components, it is important to have a dedicated staff member willing and able to put in the effort to build the YAC. There are workshops and trainings* available to help develop coordinators' skills, but much of what makes a staff member successful in this role is enthusiasm, dedication, and persistence.

Ideally, one or two staff people serve as the designated YAC coordinator(s) in order to maintain consistency. That person may have some time and resources dedicated to YAC work, and must have creativity, patience, and persistence in getting the YAC off the ground. Some organizations have taken advantage of grants to provide that staff person with time dedicated to YAC implementation and development. Note that many YACs do not have a full or part time coordinator. Some YACs have found a special individual who is willing to take on the additional responsibility. Regardless of your resources, developing a thriving YAC absolutely is within reach for anyone!

* http://www.cypq.org/products_and_services/training/YWM

CREATING A YAC

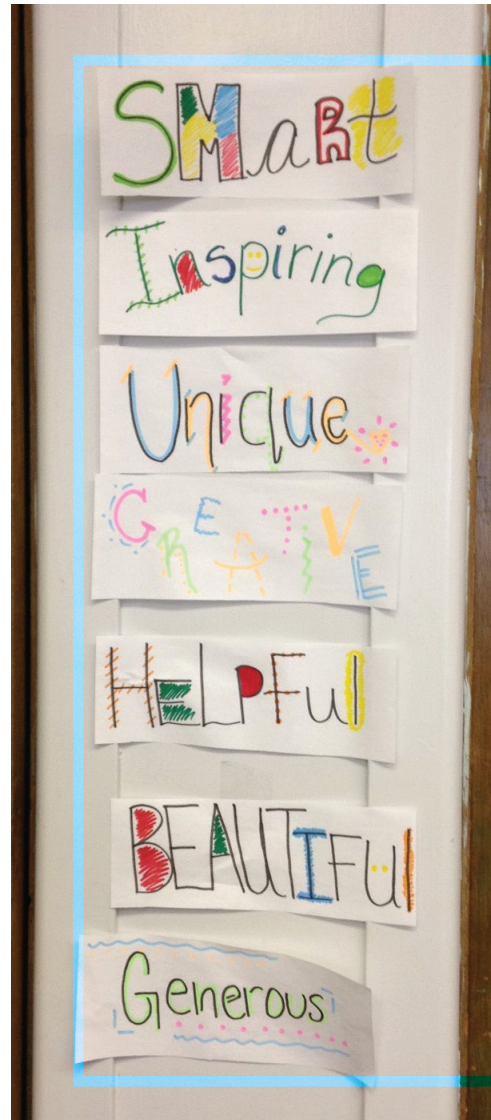
YACs can be born out of many different projects or ideas. During the initial inception, youth involvement is especially important, even if there is only one youth regularly attending meetings or helping to make the program succeed.

CORE COMPONENTS

YAC members and coordinators say that it is ideal for YACs to be youth-led, which means that youth members are involved in all aspects of planning and implementation of the program, such as setting agendas and running meetings. However, YACs do require adult support, structure, and resources. Finding the delicate balance of sufficient adult support and youth voice can be a tricky and constantly evolving matter. This balance is often a challenge when working in youth development, but keeping in mind the core components of a YAC can help to make finding and maintaining this balance easier.

ACCORDING TO OUR YOUTH, THESE ARE THE 5 CORE COMPONENTS OF HAVING A SUCCESSFUL YAC:

- 1 Youth-led
- 2 Consistent, structured meetings
- 3 Community building
- 4 Offering a safe space for students to come and just be
- 5 Planning, implementing, and reflecting on meaningful projects



FINDING THE FIT

The basic purpose of a YAC is to give youth a voice within a program or organization, and this manual focuses on YACs within health centers. Having a thorough understanding of where exactly the YAC fits within the organizational structure can influence the mission, goals, and direction that the YAC will take.

Examples of organizational fit provided by our youth include:

- Advisors to the Community Advisory Council, Staff, or Board of Directors
- Youth voice of the SBHC within the school and the community
- Youth voice of the school
- Advisors for specific projects within the SBHC

REMEMBER:
It is normal for there to be an "implementation dip" when starting anything new. Recognize that a lull after initial enthusiasm is part of the process, and focus on finding ways to build momentum!

BEHIND THE SCENES

STAFF TIME

The amount of time staff may spend on YAC-related work varies greatly from group to group. At a site like the Corner Health Center, Monique, the Youth Leadership Council coordinator, has time and salary specifically dedicated to the YLC, and she averages about 8 hours/week doing YLC-related work. Other sites can average between 1-2 hours per week, including the time involved in group meetings. There is variation involved in staff time required on a week-to-week basis, though - some weeks are busier with preparations for a project launch while other weeks can be much less labor-intensive.

The YAC-related activities requiring the time of the YAC coordinator are comparable across sites. These include meeting time, meeting preparation and follow up, community building activities and other activity planning, communicating with YAC members, reserving space for activities, planning events, researching health topics, gathering and printing materials, and communicating with administration and school staff.

One important thing to note, though, is that initiating a YAC can take substantially more time than sustaining it. Some YAC coordinator responsibilities can be shared with YAC members once it is up and running. For example, meeting preparation and follow up, planning and leading ice breakers and activities, and researching health topics are all learning opportunities for youth members and can be given to members to free up some coordinator time.

FUNDING

There is great variation in the funding and operating budgets among YACs. Some YACs are affiliated with larger organizations whose boards of directors are deeply dedicated to youth/adult partnership, and therefore have organizational funding as well as staff dedicated to development of funds specifically for the YAC. One YAC, for example, operates on a \$30,000 per year budget. This includes staff time, yearly stipends for members, meeting and activity materials, and food for every meeting.

Some YACs operate on budgets ranging from \$500 to \$10,000, which can come from organizational funds, grant money, or contest prizes. For example, the Depression Center at the University of Michigan offered a small grant for a YAC to work on a school-wide depression campaign. Another example involves Michigan Department of Education's Safe and Supportive Schools grant, which was implemented at a high school with a YAC. The YAC partnered with the school to share resources, which expanded their opportunities for projects.

Many YACs do not receive any funding at all and must operate with the resources and materials they have from the health center and school. Building relationships with school staff, for example the school media center or art department, can be invaluable for these folks!

HERE ARE SOME SAMPLE BUDGETS

YAC BUDGET

Hosting: food for 5 meetings	\$250
Project materials: t-shirts, pens, bracelets, fortune cookies	\$300
Additional supplies	\$60
Transportation	\$240
Hosting: snacks for YAC meetings	\$400
Trainings for youth members on video scripting and production (\$300 for 3 hour training)	\$300
T-shirts for YAC members (10 members): 10@\$10 = \$100	\$100
Video cameras: 2 @ \$100 each	\$200
Video production: 1 video @ \$1,000	\$1,000
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$2,850

BUDGET ITEMS	EXPLANATION	PROJECT TOTAL
YAC INCENTIVES		
YAC Bowling Party	Celebration	\$315
Yearly scholarships for 2 seniors	2 students in the YAC or volunteered with the SBHC: \$250 x 2 students/yr x 6 yrs	\$3,000
MATERIALS & SUPPLIES		
4 Android Tablets	To help students with projects and research. @ \$99 each	\$400
Microphone w/ camera mount	Allow for higher quality videos to be produced by the YAC \$62.15+shipping	\$75
STUDENT INCENTIVES		
SBHC Health Promotion T-Shirts	400 shirts @ \$5.96 each	\$2,385
I'm Healthy and I Know It T-Shirts	100 shirts @ \$9.25 each	\$925
STIPENDS		
Stipends for YAC members	Members w/ 50+ volunteer hours in SBHC in 1yr; 50 stipends @ \$50 each	\$2,500
MISCELLANEOUS		
Target Gift cards	16 @ \$25 to be used as incentives	\$400
TOTAL EXPENSES:		\$10,000

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Once you are ready to start a YAC, recruitment should be on the top of your priority list! This is one of the first opportunities for youth involvement and can set the tone for a truly youth-driven YAC. Consider finding one or two youth interested in participating in the YAC who can serve as consultants and/or leaders of the recruitment process. Monique, the YLC Coordinator from the Corner Health Center, remembers many times in which she and Brianna, the president, would be the only two people who showed up for meetings. They would spend that time thinking about their approach and revising their strategy in order to recruit more members. That was only two short years ago and now they have a large and thriving YAC!



STRATEGIES FOR INITIATING

While there are many ways to start a YAC from scratch, none of them are right or wrong. Rather, it is a matter of finding the strategy that works best for your site and your students. If possible, encourage your key early members to help staff with outreach efforts. Strategies include:

- 1 Hold an interactive informational meeting with a hook to draw students in.
- 2 Conduct classroom presentations to educate and inform students about the health center and YAC.
- 3 Build excitement and awareness through a short-term, simple project like PhotoVoice*.
- 4 Host tables in the cafeteria during lunch periods (food is a great incentive!)

HOW TO RECRUIT

When recruiting youth to join a YAC, the messages used to recruit can be just as important as the methods. According to our YAC group, these are some ideas for how to get youth interested in a YAC:

- Talk about past projects. The feeling of accomplishment resonates well with youth.
- Discuss goals for the year.
- Talk about events and group discussions.
- Make youth feel at ease.
- Communicate that the work they do with YAC can go towards community service hours.

It is ideal to use a few different methods to recruit youth. While one message and approach may be appealing to one student, it may not catch the attention of another student who's also a great fit for the YAC. Some YACs may consider having a recruitment chair or committee to help with the recruitment process.

*www.photovoice.org

BELOW ARE ADDITIONAL IDEAS TO CONSIDER WHEN RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS:

INITIATE YOUR OWN EFFORTS:

- Have awareness days/weeks
- Host lunch booths
- Host recruitment parties
- Have raffles with prizes
- Present health-related skits

MEETING INCENTIVES CAN BE THE FINAL PUSH TO GET PEOPLE TO COME TO MEETINGS:

- Free food
- Stipend
- Fun activities

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:

- Pep rallies/ parades/festivals
- School radio announcements
- Class presentations

INDIVIDUALS CAN MAKE A BIG IMPACT, TOO:

- One of the most successful approaches is a teacher or health center staff member recommending a student for YAC
- Friends discussing YAC with their peers can also encourage others to give it a try
- Members recruiting at local hang outs, for example the local library or recreation center, also make a big impact on recruitment

WHY JOIN A YAC?

When asked why they joined their YAC, many YAC group members gave thoughtful, sincere, and similar answers about the important components of their YAC and their own personal involvement.



WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO JOIN A YAC?

- It looked fun and awesome
- We thought it was cool
- A friend invited me to a meeting
- My advisor suggested that I join
- To be heard
- The food; the stipend
- To meet new people
- To build my resume and college application
- To work on specific projects (e.g., bullying, depression, pregnancy prevention, Photo Voice)
- To make a difference; to do something for the community; to have something useful to do
- To help my school become more positive
- I was looking for somewhere to fit in
- To have the opportunity to travel



WHY IS DIVERSITY IMPORTANT TO YOU AND YOUR YAC?

- It's important to get different opinions
- We are inclusive of all
- It is in our mission statement and operating procedures
- Having diverse experiences and personalities makes our group stronger



WHAT KEEPS YOU COMING TO YAC?

- I like to do something that everyone else doesn't do
- My friends and advisors
- The activities and projects
- The opportunity to learn about health
- The amazing people, fun discussions, and helping our school
- The food; the stipend
- The opportunity to listen to others' input and views
- Having an impact in my community; I'm helping to make a difference
- The opportunity for growth and experience
- The YAC is my second family
- I want students to feel good about their school and know their voices are heard through changes we make
- I want to leave the school better than when I came
- Having a safe space
- It is nice to do productive things with my friends

Diversity is definitely a key component in our group's success. The way in which we acquire such a different array of people is to look for areas that we don't cover and seek out people that are different than ourselves.





WHAT QUALITIES
DO YOU LOOK FOR IN
NEW MEMBERS?

NON-JUDGEMENTAL

DEDICATED

RESPECTFUL

LOYAL

TEAM PLAYER

COMMITTED

MOTIVATED

HONEST

CREATIVE

AWARE OF
COMMUNITY

Facilitating discussion with returning members about what qualities they're looking for in new candidates can help them live up to these qualities. Take a look at a few of our YAC group's applications and interview materials in Appendix A.



SELECTING YAC MEMBERS

The range of options for a selection process for a YAC is broad and will likely evolve as your group grows and matures. Some groups may begin by selecting a few individual students who will initially help the YAC coordinator build the program, and then transition to accepting applications and conducting interviews for new members. Some YACs may not do any interviews at all, while other YACs may have the YAC coordinator conduct interviews of potential members. Although this last option is not youth-driven, it may be the only possibility given limited availability of YAC members to conduct interviews.

Requiring an application adds a protective step of ensuring that prospective members are genuinely interested in participating in the YAC and that they will be dedicated to the group, especially if interviews are not possible. Incidentally, none of the six sites surveyed have turned away youth from joining the group. However, “casting the net wide” to get a large pool of applicants and then selecting only a set number allows you to be selective – which can mean stronger candidates and a more diverse group.

YOU HAVE A YAC. NOW WHAT?

SETTING UP MEETINGS

In order to maximize attendance, it is important to get youth input on meeting days and times. You may have to go through a trial and error phase in order to find a time that’s the best fit for the group. Once you find that fit, stick with it and be consistent! All youth surveyed said that they like regular and frequent meetings.

Some YACs that are just starting may only hold meetings as needed for specific projects. Other new groups may meet more often, perhaps once per month, but not on a consistent day or at a regular time. While these methods are not as structured or steady as youth prefer, they are a starting point – and you have to start somewhere!

In most of the school-based health centers we surveyed, coordinators have found that lunch time is the most feasible time to meet, although this usually presents time and logistic limitations. Among our YAC groups who meet during lunch, meetings range from 20-40 minutes. Others who are able to meet after school can meet for up to 2 hours (which may also allow for an additional time for YAC leadership to plan for the next meeting.)



It was hard to find a time for us to meet. We’re all so busy!

What was really helpful was having a flexible advisor that was open to meeting during non-traditional times so that our meetings wouldn’t conflict with our school and work commitments.

SOME BARRIERS TO AND SOLUTIONS FOR SETTING UP YAC MEETINGS:

BARRIERS

SHORT LUNCH PERIODS, MEMBERS HAVE DIFFERENT LUNCH SCHEDULES

NO AFTERSCHOOL BUSES OR TRANSPORTATION TO/FROM MEETINGS

MEMBERS FORGET TO SHOW UP AT MEETINGS

MEMBERS HAVE OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULAR COMMITMENTS THAT CONFLICT WITH YAC MEETINGS

SOLUTIONS

- Create lunch passes for students to get in the front of the lunch line and therefore get to the YAC meeting sooner.
- Meet more often.
- Stagger YAC meetings by upperclassmen and lowerclassmen if they have different lunch periods.
- Work with your school administration to gain support for the YAC and the time required for students to participate.

- Evening or weekend meetings may be possible, if necessary, once a sense of community has been established. Students will likely be willing to offer rides to other students if the YAC is working on an important project that requires extra time.
- If public transportation is available in your community, consider providing transportation assistance (i.e., bus tokens) to YAC members.

- Having a simple and set meeting schedule is extremely helpful. For example, when Saginaw High School started their YAC, their meetings occurred every other week, which was confusing to students. When they changed the meetings to the same time and day every week, the attendance greatly improved. Plus, students were much more engaged.

- Create sub-committees to meet outside of YAC meetings and complete smaller projects.

SHAPING ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Setting a foundation for a thriving YAC requires a balance between adult support and youth voice. Along with determining the organizational fit, mission, and goals, outlining the responsibilities of both the youth members and the YAC coordinator helps everyone understand expectations.

Below are examples of roles and responsibilities that some of our YAC groups use:

YOUTH*

- Choose a subcommittee and carry out designated activities
- Attend and participate in meetings
- Run school health promotion activities such as creating posters
- Recruit new members to join
- Identify a project and carry out the tasks needed to complete it
- Lead decision-making in regards to project content and project implementation
- Work with the YAC coordinator to draft the meeting agendas
- Facilitate meetings
- Keep meeting minutes
- Create a strategic plan for the group every year
- Act as a representative of school health center
- Facilitate conversations among youth
- Execute monthly outreach activities
- Actively voice opinions

YAC COORDINATOR

- Build community
- Have consistent, structured meetings
- Meet with facilitators to plan agenda
- Meet with facilitators to reflect on agenda
- Provide food/snacks for meetings
- Arrange offsite activities
- Develop program budget
- Write grants in partnership with youth members to support the program
- Communicate meeting times and location
- Send out reminders about meetings and events via social media or text message
- Conduct a short educational lesson at a meeting based on the topic that is being covered
- Facilitate group norms
- Provide guidance in terms of barriers for projects
- Gather supplies for youth activities

* Based on the level of youth leadership within a YAC, youth may do any of the above activities with support from an adult coordinator.

PLANNING MEETINGS

Ideally, YAC meetings are led by youth. Meetings may be led by the group's president or vice president, co-directors, or a youth with particularly strong facilitation skills. It is likely that this will not be the case in the very beginning stages of creating a YAC, but as soon as it's possible, the YAC coordinator and youth leaders can work towards a model where youth set the agenda and facilitate meetings.

As you may notice in the sample agenda outlines, the end of a meeting often includes an opportunity for reflection. Reflection activities can allow youth to think back on what has been accomplished, how they feel, and what they may choose to do differently next time. While it is important to include this piece for the group, it may also be helpful to conduct an additional reflection time – even just 2 - 5 minutes – with just the YAC leadership team. This will help guide the leadership team in their agenda-planning for upcoming meetings and identify areas in which they want to improve in terms of group norms/ rule enforcement, meeting facilitation, etc.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

When a group has been established for a period of time, they can benefit from high-level, long-term planning. At the beginning of each year, you may choose to have your YAC engage in a strategic planning retreat or workshop. This can provide youth with the opportunity to both reflect on last year's accomplishments and challenges, as well as determine their plan for the upcoming year. This type of planning sets the stage for a genuinely youth-driven group, and places responsibility and decision-making within the hands of youth.

BELOW ARE SAMPLE AGENDA OUTLINES TO CONSIDER:

AGENDA #1

1. Ice breaker (student led)
2. Announcements
3. Main focus (discussion of project)
4. Reflection and next steps

AGENDA #2

1. Eat food and check in (how has your week been?)
2. Ice breaker
3. Announcements
4. Main focus
5. Reflection

AGENDA #3

1. Main focus
2. Reflection
3. Next steps for project

In addition to the sample planning tools, agendas, and reflection sheets in Appendix B, you can find more examples from the Michigan Department of Community Health's Youth Engagement Through Youth Advisory Councils Manual*.

DETERMINING A MISSION/GOALS

In order to establish a firm foundation for your YAC, consider working with your youth to develop a mission statement, goals, and/or bylaws. Each of these pieces will help to bring clarity to the purpose of the YAC and guide the group through projects and meetings while helping to sustain the group over time.

* https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_4911_4912-342474--,00.html

BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF THE MISSION STATEMENTS AND/OR GOALS OF SOME OF THE YAC GROUPS:

THE CORNER HEALTH CENTER

The YLC is a diverse, youth-led group that stand to uphold leadership, promote change, and raise awareness about community health issues.

The YLC's goals are to:

- Research community health issues;
- Use media and the arts to advocate for change;
- Partner with youth, adults, and other organizations to make the Corner Health Center and its surrounding community a healthier place for young people.

LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

The YAC's goals are to serve as leaders in the school and community and to promote a healthier student body.

MUMFORD HIGH SCHOOL

The goals of the YAC are to raise awareness of different health topics throughout the school, complete community outreach activities, promote leadership skills, provide input for various places in the clinic, and assist with clinic recruitment.

PELLSTON HIGH SCHOOL

The YAC's goals are to provide youth feedback and represent the youth voice to ensure operations of the health center are meeting the needs of youth.

BUILDING COMMUNITY WITHIN THE YAC

Establishing a sense of community is necessary in creating and maintaining a high-functioning YAC. Adolescents may feel pressure to fit into social groups in school or to act a certain way, but one of the things many YAC members indicate that they like about coming to YAC meetings is that they can be themselves there. All YACs find different ways to do this, often using multiple approaches throughout the year. For example, many YACs do check-ins and ice breakers at the beginning of each meeting. Check-in activities can be as simple as everyone sharing the rose and thorn of their week, or describing their mood by weather. Other ice breakers may involve using pipe cleaners to make a shape of something that describes you and sharing it with the group, or picking an object out of a bag and describing why you feel that it is interesting. Additional examples of ice breaker activities can be found in the MDCH's Youth Engagement through Advisory Councils Manual* and Team Work and Team Play's Raccoon Circles.†

Code of conduct/ground rules/group norms – whatever a group chooses to call them – are important points that can set the foundation for a respectful and productive climate in a YAC. Determining these together at the beginning of the year (and checking in with it when needed) can ensure that the YAC is a safe space. Below are general ground rule examples:

1. Challenge the idea, not the person
2. No swearing, name calling, or yelling at other participants
3. What happens here stays here
4. Be wary of assumptions
5. Challenge others respectfully

The YACs at Arthur Hill and Saginaw High School establish “Norms and Ground Rules” at the beginning of each school year. Below is their list:

1. Respect
2. One diva one mic (one person talking at a time)
3. Don't yuck my yum (don't judge others' likes/dislikes)
4. Don't personalize (don't talk about people who aren't there)
5. Have fun
6. Shake not shout (cell phones on vibrate/silent)
7. Step up, step back (if you're sharing a lot, step back and let someone else share; if you tend to be quiet, try to step forward more)

Here's another sample list created by TAC TAC at the Adolescent Health Initiative for the 2018-19 school year.

1. Take space, make space (an inclusive way to say step up, step back)
2. Life experience is evidence (someone's experience shouldn't be invalidated because it goes against the norm or the research)
3. What's learned here leaves here, what's said here stays here
4. Ouch, oops! (let the group know when something that was said hurt you, acknowledge that you made a mistake that hurt or offended someone)
5. Be present in all ways (come to meetings but also don't be distracted by outside influences while you are here)
6. Communication kills assumptions

* http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_4911_4912-342474--,00.html

† http://www.teamworkandteamplay.com/resources/new_rc_document_2011_final.pdf



LEADERSHIP SELECTION

If you and your YAC do decide to create leadership positions within your YAC, the next step is to determine how youth will be selected for those positions. It is important that this process is consistent, fair, and transparent.

Youth can volunteer for positions or they can nominate their peers. If nominations take place, nominees should have the option to accept or decline the nomination. Some YACs also allow time for quick speeches for nominees to explain why their peers should vote for them. If you have numerous candidates for positions, elections can be held.

Elections can be conducted in a variety of ways. Many groups choose to do them anonymously. For example, they can be done by ballot (with the YAC

coordinator collecting the votes) or with a blind vote (where the members close their eyes and the YAC coordinator counts hands raised or thumbs up.) Some sites do elections at their annual retreat while others do them at the end of the school year for positions for the upcoming year. Two of the YACs had eligibility requirements outlined for YAC leadership positions in order to ensure that the roles will be filled by highly qualified students. Sample requirements for YAC members to be selected in a leadership role include:

- Must be an active member of the YAC
- Must be a YAC member for at least a year
- Must be in good academic standing (e.g., minimum GPA of 2.0)

For the YACs that do hold elections for leadership positions, elections are generally done once per year.

POTENTIAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

President: Lead YAC meetings (e.g., scheduling, notifying members, and chairing meetings); act as a liaison between the YAC and school administration and SBHC staff, speak on behalf of the YAC at all major school and community functions.

Vice President: Assist the president, treasurer, and secretary; in the absence of an officer, the VP shall step in; responsible for all written correspondence that takes place outside of YAC (e.g., school newspaper, YAC newsletter, etc.)

Treasurer: Keep a record of expenses of the organization and help to budget programs and events with guidance from advisor.

Secretary: Oversee the communication of meeting times, events; record and maintain meeting minutes and any important documents.

Sergeant of Arms: Facilitate group norms/ground rules; enforce rules of YAC; conduct roll call and keep attendance.

Media Chair: Update YAC social media accounts with information on meetings, events; oversee video creating process.

Philanthropy/Service Chair: Planning and supervision of philanthropic/service events where the YAC raises money for a cause or group e.g. giving of money, time, or resources to any organization or group.

Public Relations Chair: Responsible for posters, banners, table displays, and other publicity for YAC events. Note: needs approval from advisor before anything is posted.

Recruitment Chair: Responsible for all promotional materials, activities, and events of the YAC and informs the YAC when such events take place.

YAC PROJECTS

WHY DO PROJECTS?

Youth in the YAC group said that projects allow them to be creative and are valuable in getting everyone to work together on one task. Projects are also a great way for the YAC to relay positive messages to the school and increase clinic visibility.

Whether you do one, two, or ten projects per year, providing the opportunity for students to collaborate and create a finished product will help them to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose, both as individuals and as a group. Projects also offer tremendous professional development opportunities for students.

The number of and the scope of projects vary greatly among our different sites, with some YACs choosing to do one per month and others choosing to do one large project per year and smaller projects along the way. Some sites follow monthly health themes to determine their project.

Examples are as follows:

- **September:** Back to School/Welcome Recruitment/Goal Setting
- **October:** Bullying Prevention Month
- **November:** Drug/Alcohol Awareness
- **December:** World AIDS Day/Adopt-a-Family Project
- **January:** Differs each year
- **February:** Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month
- **March:** Nutrition Month
- **April:** GYT: Get Yourself Tested Campaign
- **May:** Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month



PROJECTS ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY ARE A REFLECTION OF OUR CLUB AND THE WORK WE DO.



PROJECTS ARE A BIG PART OF WHAT WE DO AND THEY ARE VERY VALUABLE.



THEY GET US ALL WORKING TOGETHER ON ONE TASK AND HELP GET OUR POINT ACROSS TO THE SCHOOL.

HOW TO CHOOSE A PROJECT

Some YACs may use their regular meeting time to decide upon projects as a group. Other YACs may hold a strategic planning meeting to decide on some or all of their projects for the year. Groups use different strategies to both gather ideas for projects and make the final decision on which projects to move forward with.

Examples of strategies provided by our YAC group include:

- Brainstorm as a group and write ideas on a timeline. Everyone's opinion is valued.
- Use varied group discussion techniques:
 - Have a group discussion with flip-chart paper.
 - Have smaller group discussions and share ideas with the larger group.
 - Pair with a partner to share ideas and report out to the larger group.
- Use a T-chart to help organize pros and cons of doing a specific project.

In most YACs, youth vote or voice their opinions to reach a consensus on which projects the group chooses to do.

PROJECT BUDGET

Often, a project budget must be considered before the final approval of a project idea. Some sites may receive funding to work on ongoing projects. Other sites will periodically write grants for specific projects that they are hoping to do. In this situation, the YAC coordinator will often be the leader in grant writing, but the YAC can be responsible for generating ideas for content. Project budgets are certainly an important piece of the process to keep in mind as it may be a limiting factor in which or how many projects a YAC can do.

TRAININGS REQUIRED FOR PROJECTS

While some projects might simply require the creativity and hard work of YAC members, others might be more complex and require more skills-building before students can jump in. Project-related trainings are fantastic professional development opportunities for youth and allow them to both witness their own growth and complete a product that they can truly be proud of.

Below are some examples of trainings that members of the YAC group have participated in:

- Lincoln High School's YAC did a school-wide depression campaign, which was a result of training the YAC received at the University of Michigan Peer-to-Peer Depression Conference.
- The Corner Health Center's YLC received training on running focus groups and making videos.
- Saginaw and Arthur Hill High Schools' YACs used grant money for trainings from the Neutral Zone on how to be a more sustainable YAC, and from the former Student Life Director at UM Flint on how to create a constitution & bylaws, develop the organizational structure, and author the pledge they abide by.

PROJECT REFLECTION

Reflection is critical in bringing the entire process of completing a project full circle. Whether or not there is a formal process for project reflection, taking the time to discuss successes and challenges will benefit the group for future activities. Some groups may do this once at the end of the year and summarize all of their projects; others may do this after each individual project. Reflection provides great opportunities for students to stop and think critically about the intention of the project, the process, and the final product.

Many groups choose to use reflection activities to discuss projects, such as stating the rose, bud, and thorn. In this activity, each youth has the opportunity to share their "rose" of the project, their favorite piece of it; their "bud," something that went well or had the opportunity to go really well if they had done something slightly different; and their "thorn," something that didn't go so well or as planned. This activity sheds light on both the positives and negatives of a project, providing youth with the opportunity to think about what worked well and what they may do differently next time.

"WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT PROJECTS?"

GROUP ORGANIZATION

INFORMATIVE

HELPING THE SCHOOL

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

CREATIVITY

POSITIVITY

THEY ARE FUN

WORKING TOGETHER

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

"WHAT ARE SOME AREAS OF FRUSTRATION WITH YOUR PROJECTS?"

NOT ENOUGH TIME TO GET THINGS DONE

PROJECTS THAT TAKE TOO LONG AND CAUSE US TO LOSE INTEREST

WHEN THINGS DON'T GO AS PLANNED

BALANCING TOO MANY PROJECTS AT ONCE



PROJECT IDEAS AND EXAMPLES

CREATE ARTWORK FOR CLINIC

REVIEW PROGRAMS FOR POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION IN THE HEALTH CENTER

SET UP PREVENTION DAY BOOTHS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL; HAVE EACH BOOTH CONTAIN INFORMATION ON A DIFFERENT TOPIC

DEVELOP SBHC OR YAC MISSION STATEMENT AND BYLAWS

MEET WITH STATE REPRESENTATIVES TO SHARE THE IMPORTANCE OF SBHCS

PERFORM A CLINIC ASSESSMENT WITH AHI'S YOUTH-LED HEALTH CENTER ASSESSMENT TOOL AND FACILITATOR GUIDE

CELEBRATE WORLD AIDS DAY AWARENESS WITH POETRY READING BY YAC

CREATE AN ANTI-BULLYING PSA

CREATE DEPRESSION POSTERS, VIDEOS, AND GIVEAWAYS WITH POSITIVE DEPRESSION-RELATED MESSAGES

ASSIST WITH TOURS OF THE SBHC, FOR EXAMPLE WHEN LEGISLATORS VISIT

ASSIST WITH PROMOTION OF EVENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, FOR THE MENINGOCOCCAL INCENTIVE INITIATIVE, THERE WAS A PIZZA PARTY OFFERED TO THOSE WHO RECEIVED THEIR VACCINES AND THE YAC CREATED POSTERS TO ADVERTISE THIS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL

GYT CAMPAIGN- HAND OUT BUTTONS/ STICKERS AND INFORMATION AT LUNCH; HAVE A COMPETITION WITH RIVAL SCHOOL TO SEE WHO CAN GET THE MOST STI TESTS

CREATE HYGIENE BAGS FOR YOUTH

USE PHOTOVOICE TO DOCUMENT THE HEALTH NEEDS OF TEENS IN YOUR COMMUNITY. SHARE THE PHOTOGRAPHS WITH DECISION-MAKERS IN YOUR SCHOOL, COMMUNITY, OR STATE TO ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

REVIEW EXISTING HEALTH EDUCATION MATERIALS USED IN CLINIC INCLUDING BROCHURES AND POSTERS

CREATE VIDEOS ABOUT TOPICS THAT THE YAC WANTS TO COMMUNICATE TO THE SCHOOL, HEALTH CENTER STAFF, OR A BROADER AUDIENCE

VOTE ON PAINT COLORS FOR THE SBHC

CREATE TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS HALLWAY DISPLAYS AND A VALENTINE CARD MAKING BOOTH

PLAN AN ANNUAL BLOCK PARTY

DRAFT FLYERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE SBHC

CONDUCT A BULLYING PREVENTION WORKSHOP

DESIGN A YOUTH SPACE FOR THE HEALTH CENTER

Additional project samples and resources are available in Appendix D.

Creating and sustaining a thriving YAC may not be an option for everyone at this particular time. While the intention of this manual is to provide YAC coordinators with ideas and resources to build a robust YAC, there are many other ways to get youth involved without having to organize a formal group.

For health centers or clinics that want to have youth involvement without having a fully-functioning YAC, our youth members provided the following areas that they feel are most important to consult youth about:

- Which services are offered and how youth want them to be provided.
- The physical space— Is it youth-friendly?
 - Youth can help choose and create décor, posters, paint colors, artwork, etc.
- Peer education— ask students how they want messages to be communicated and who they want to be responsible for the dissemination of those messages.
- Ideas for health center promotion.

HOW TO GET YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITHOUT HAVING A YAC

If you don't have a YAC but want to get youth input from students, what can you do?

You can consider:

- Conducting youth surveys.
- Getting a few youth you are familiar with involved in a specific project with clear goals and tasks during lunch or after school.
- Conducting focus groups with 5-10 youth (providing an incentive such as food will definitely help!)
- Involving youth in a decision-making board, such as the Community Advisory Board or Board of Directors at the health center.
- Asking youth to volunteer in the community alongside adult staff.
- Having select students help to create announcements, posters, and decorations for the health center. Consider recruiting an after-school club to do this so you do not have to do individual student recruitment on your own.

(Available for free download at adolescenthealthinitiative.org)

APPENDIX A.....APPLICATIONS & INTERVIEW RESOURCES

- The Corner Health Center Member Application
- RAHS Member Application
- Romulus YAC Membership Nominee Form
- General YAC Interview Questions
- Ypsilanti Community High School YAC Interview Questions
- YAC Selection: Interview Ratings
- Sample Acceptance Letter & Sample So Sorry Letter

APPENDIX B.....MEETING FORMS

- 30 Minute or Less Agendas from the Neutral Zone
- Saginaw High School TAC Meeting Agenda
- Saginaw High School TAC Exec Board Meeting Agenda
- Romulus YAC Board Meeting
- Sample Meeting Agenda with activities
- RAHS YAC Expectations and Benefits
- RAHS YAC Member Guidelines
- Student MOU for P2P Depression Awareness Program
- YLC Meeting Recap Form

APPENDIX C.....YAC FOUNDATIONS

- The Corner Bylaws
- Arthur Hill and Saginaw High TAC Constitution
- Arthur Hill and Saginaw High TAC History
- Student Involvement Stages from the Neutral Zone
- Saginaw High School TAC "Think.Respect" Pledge
- RAHS YAC Program Philosophy
- RAHS YAC Who Are We and Why Are We Here?

APPENDIX D.....PROJECT PLANNING & EXAMPLES

- YLC Project Management Log
- Project Example: Prevention Day Booths
- Arthur Hill and Saginaw High TAC Events Overview
- Project Example: P2P Depression Awareness Projects

APPENDIX E.....PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

- Saginaw High School Social Media Flyer
- RAHS YAC Recruitment Flyer
- YAC Celebration Flyer
- Real Talk (Health Fair Event) Flyer
- Corner Health Center Parent Connection Flyer

ADOLESCENT HEALTH INITIATIVE

Effective January 9, 2018

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