

# Lead the Way:

*Engaging Youth in School-Based Health Care*



**SCHOOL-BASED  
HEALTH ALLIANCE**  
Redefining Health for Kids and Teens

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### **Acknowledgements:**

This toolkit was developed for the School-Based Health Alliance by the California School-Based Health Alliance and the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers with support from The Atlantic Philanthropies.

Special thanks to Kathleen Gutierrez, Susan Hildebrand, Jan Strozer, Samantha Blackburn, and Divya Mohan-Little for gathering the information and resources made available in this toolkit. Additional thanks to the 2011 Youth Track attendees and their chaperones for their input.

# Section 1: Rationale for Youth Engagement

Children and youth are the most important actors in school-based health care. As the primary stakeholders in school-based health centers (SBHCs), youth can offer critical support in SBHC development and service delivery, as well as advocacy for school-based health services. Effective SBHCs recognize the necessity of youth participation in decision-making processes and engage youth in various aspects of the health center.

## How School-Based Health Centers Benefit from Youth Engagement

Youth engagement can enhance the basic building blocks of SBHCs including community assessments, outreach and promotion, and service delivery. Once meaningfully engaged, youth can also support policy and advocacy efforts for SBHCs and the broader school health movement.

**Community asset mapping and needs assessments** are vital for SBHCs to gauge the pressing health concerns of a school campus and its surrounding community. Youth are key informants with regard to providing insight on the health conditions of their environment. Young people who are engaged in school health can likewise assist in survey development and community data collection, with peer-to-peer surveys, and in the dissemination of their findings.

Youth can provide input on the **types of services** they most often seek and suggest what services should be offered and how such services can be best delivered. Additionally, youth can speak to the level of cultural competency within the SBHC and recommend practices that would facilitate more meaningful client-provider interaction. By partnering with youth, SBHCs uphold patients' priorities in the fullest sense: they listen to and respect the needs of their clients and actively participate in more meaningful health care delivery.

Young people can bolster **outreach and promotion** of school-based health services. As SBHC clients, students can serve as a conduit between the health center and new clients, especially when they are enthusiastic about the services and programs provided by the health center. In this regard, youth are a key resource in promoting a positive image of SBHCs for their peers—an image that emphasizes safety, friendliness, and trust. When youth engagement is prioritized, SBHCs gain the added advantage of having passionate advocate-clients.

In line with service delivery, **peer-to-peer health education** is another way young people can become engaged with a health center, relevant adolescent health issues, and the peers they educate. With thorough preparation and culturally competent health curricula, young people can be trained to educate students and other youth on a variety of health topics, conflict mediation, positive relationships, and SBHC resources.

Youth are also poised for **policy and advocacy mobilization** on behalf of SBHCs. Young school health advocates bring an often unheard voice to the local, state, and even national policy level. In turn, most community stakeholders and policymakers value youth engagement and the integrity youth bring to the table. Youth can lead advocacy actions, legislative visits, letter-writing campaigns, neighborhood forums, and other activities that support the SBHC's cause.

Finally, youth engagement helps SBHCs become more equitable in their work. When SBHC staff and clinicians acknowledge and uphold youth perspective in health center operations and advocacy, they exhibit a model health care system that values collective input, patient rights, and the holistic success of children and youth. Ultimately, the benefits gleaned from youth engagement are equally significant to the youth who participate in and contribute to school health centers.

### *How Youth Benefit from Being Engaged*

Youth engagement is a two-way partnership that not only considers the mission and needs of an organization or project: it prioritizes the total wellness and interests of young people. Collaborative partnerships between SBHCs and youth cultivate self-efficacy, empowerment, and skills that youth carry into adulthood.

When you respect young people's capacity and initiative to complete a task or lead a project, you increase the young leaders' sense of **self-efficacy**. Successful engagement gives youth the opportunity to participate fully and exceed expectations others may place on them or that the youth have internalized themselves. This self-efficacy can then be applied in other realms of young people's lives, such as healthy decision-making, academic performance, and goal-setting.

Policy advocacy successes, task completion, or even the assurance that one's school health services recommendations are taken into consideration empower adults and youth alike. **Empowerment**, like self-efficacy, is a fundamental outcome of youth engagement that enables youth to be assertive as SBHC clients, students, and leaders in their communities.

This empowerment can also motivate youth to make healthier decisions and practice healthier behaviors. Throughout the youth engagement process, SBHC staff and adult allies are tasked with providing health information and guidance for their young people. As a result, youth become more aware of the consequences of risky and unhealthy behaviors, the social determinants of health, and the health disparities in their communities.

Youth engagement in SBHCs equips young people with practical **skills**. Meeting facilitation, public speaking, time management, survey collection, and a teamwork ethic are only a few of the skills youth gain when they work cooperatively with a SBHC. Effective youth programs foster an environment conducive to academic success and career-building: young people gain guidance to navigate through school and can apply their skills to their academic performance. In addition, they learn more about the health care system and the importance of preventive care. Again, the two-way youth engagement process between SBHCs and youth promotes an equal *and* equitable environment that youth can draw from in their future lives.

Youth engagement can and should be a fun and exhilarating experience for you and your students. Affirmative youth-centered programs offer young leaders the chance to make friends, network, and thrive in a safe environment. Once given the fullest opportunity to express their potential, youth have the energy to arouse support for school health and make their contribution an enjoyable one.

## Section 2: Program Models

Youth engagement can take on a variety of forms in the SBHC setting. Some exist solely to promote their own SBHC. Others broaden their activities to local, state, or even national advocacy for the SBHC model. Many youth groups focus on a particular adolescent health issue and educate their peers or fundraise around that issue. Adult allies should gauge young people's interests so they can develop the program model that best suits their skill-sets and ambitions for the health center.

### Youth-Led Research & Community Assessments

SBHC youth programs initially operate as **research and community assessment teams**. Oftentimes, this is a strong introductory model for youth teams looking for a concrete project and for new SBHCs. Young people can design the assessment tool that will eventually assist SBHC operations and advocacy. Following survey collection and with guidance from adult allies, youth teams can synthesize and analyze their findings, develop appropriate recommendations for their sites, and disseminate the results to various audiences.

Youth Action Institute (YAI), a coalition of youth set to advise and direct the planning of services for new SBHCs in Oakland, CA, worked with adult allies and partner organizations to develop the following research structure:

- Youth researchers:
  - Conduct a youth-led research project through the development and implementation of a health survey
  - Develop and share recommendations based on research findings to help plan SBHCs at their schools
- Adult allies:
  - Facilitate weekly site level meetings
  - Support YAI members (youth) to conduct site level activities
- Project facilitators
  - Provide YAI skills trainings
  - Support YAI participants and adult allies to conduct their work
- Health and research consultants
  - Provide research and technical support to YAI members
  - Assist with data analysis
  - Support dissemination of YAI recommendations

SBHC staff can follow a similar structure and tailor guides to fit the dynamics of their youth teams. For more youth-led research curricula, refer to the resources below.

### Youth Advocacy

Youth can participate in SBHC advocacy on local, state, and national levels. Before beginning advocacy work, empower your students to recognize the strength of their voice and the accomplishments of past and ongoing youth advocacy.

Young people can participate in **grassroots advocacy** by educating their peers, friends, and community members on the importance and necessity of SBHCs. Your youth team can consider collecting support signatures for SBHC legislation and holding on-campus events for advocacy education. “I support my SBHC!” petitions are one of the easiest ways youth can complete a concrete advocacy task, provide brief information on their health center, and gather signatures to be delivered to local legislators and policymakers.

Youth teams can also organize **community meetings and forums** to highlight the health center and connect its work to the broader school health policy climate. These gatherings can bring together community stakeholders, school health personnel, school faculty, and other youth and offer a space for individuals to commit to short-term or ongoing advocacy actions. Such a gathering can evolve into a **school health rally** that draws from the energy and enthusiasm of school health advocates.

For youth with an affinity for writing, **letters-to-the-editor** and other written media can be effective forms of youth-led advocacy. Adult allies can facilitate writing workshops that will not only build young people’s skills, but also serve as SBHC advocacy and potentially lead to syndicated publication!

Finally, **legislative visits and site tours** with legislators and legislative staff give policymakers a first-hand look at the impact SBHCs have on young people. Support your students if they intend to schedule and meet with legislators or invite them to visit a SBHC.

#### *Advocacy Tips*

- Keep your ear to the ground for **legislation on SBHCs and adolescent health issues**. How can youth show their support of or opposition to bills pertaining to school health?
- Consider **creative advocacy** (see Case Study below). What types of media get young people excited and engaged? How can your young people employ social and creative media to push SBHC advocacy?
- Have a **committee dedicated to advocacy**. If your youth team takes on a different engagement model, consider having an advocacy committee that is responsible for keeping the group abreast of school health policy and developing short-term advocacy actions. You should be in direct communication with committee members and update them regularly on the latest school health policy environment.
- **Think of legislators as friends**. Keep them updated on your site, invite them when special events approach, and do not only look to them when you have a policy “ask.”

## **Case Study: Youth Board Art Advocacy**

For its fourth programmatic year, the California School-Based Health Alliance Youth Board teamed up with EastSide Arts Alliance, a collective of cultural workers based in Oakland, CA, to produce an art advocacy piece that brought together personal stories and school health issues about which Youth Board members are most passionate. Guerilla theater artist Eden Jequinto and visual arts educator Jose Garcia worked with the eleven Youth Board members at each of their three in-person meetings.

For their first meeting in October 2010, Eden and Jose facilitated communications and brainstorming activities for Youth Board members to begin formalizing a clear and cohesive message for their visual arts piece. In January 2011, during their second meeting at the EastSide Community Cultural Center, the Youth Board developed the main theme and images for their advocacy piece. Drawing from the theme of health resources, Youth Board members decided to convey how SBHCs offer options and opportunities for young people. In May, the Youth Board, with support from members of the De Anza High School Youth Advisory Board, completed a mobile mural entitled “Empowering Your Health” that will travel California as SBHC advocacy tool and youth engagement resource.

This project is born from an evaluator-facilitated conversation amongst Youth Board members, as well as the California School-Based Health Alliance Youth Coordinator’s desire to give members a space for creative collaboration. At the end of their third year (May 2010), Youth Board members met with California School-Based Health Alliance’s evaluator and shared their thoughts on policy impact as youth advocates. In addition to the obstacles and achievements they have faced as young leaders in their communities, members shared positive and empowering stories as men and women of color. According to Youth Board member Nidia Escobar, who is now in her third year of membership, “I feel like when [policymakers] see a female person of color advocating ... they do know that there are certain people that are looking out for resources to improve their communities. We’re breaking stereotypes.” Following the conversation, the Youth Coordinator looked to EastSide Arts Alliance for consultation and organizational collaboration because of their long-standing influence in grassroots organizing and their history of mural designing for Bay Area SBHCs. For the first time, the Youth Board incorporated visual arts in their advocacy work and paid heed to their diverse socioeconomic

### Youth Advisory Boards

Youth advisory boards exemplify a SBHC’s vested interest in the needs of its youth clientele. This model of youth engagement is particularly useful to SBHC personnel who are committed to receiving feedback and recommendations in order to ensure the most youth-friendly of health center operations.

Advisory groups also play an integral role in the **outreach and promotion** of SBHC services. In many cases, youth advisory board members are the first link between the health center and new clients. Students’ interaction with their peers, on-the-ground outreach potential, and cultural competency with other youth enable them to be effective outreach workers for the SBHC. Because of their far reach on their school campus, youth advisory board members should be able to inform you of popular perceptions of the center and how to respond to the needs and requests of students.

Youth advisory boards can also act as a pipeline for youth who are interested in continuing **school or public health work as a career**. As an adult ally, you should make every aspect of the youth advisory board a skills-building one: group facilitation and consensus-building, meeting organization, agenda development, event planning, and networking should be practiced thoughtfully and thoroughly. Furthermore, for some SBHCs and sponsoring agencies, youth advisory board members are invited to sit on organizational boards of directors as school health liaisons and as voting members.

### Youth-Led SBHC Outreach

One of the first things your youth team can do is help promote their own SBHC. Students know how to appeal to their peers in ways that SBHC staff alone cannot fully replicate. Having student ambassadors for your SBHC will not only bring more students to you, but help keep your SBHC relevant to the needs of your students. Here are a few steps to get your SBHC outreach going: (don't forget to check out Section 3 on recruitment too).

1. **Make sure your young leaders know all the resources available at the SBHC and how students can access those resources.** Plan to spend at least an hour to present SBHC resources and answer questions. The more SBHC staff available, the better. You could also invite someone from your state's SBHC coalition to present.
2. **Set goals.** If you already have a goal, like increasing SBHC use by 5 percent, or ensuring that all students are up to date on vaccinations, share the goal and your reasons for setting it with the group. If the students can set their goals then you may want to start by having a conversation about health issues in their school and how the SBHC can help. No matter what your goal is, make sure it includes measurable outcomes so you and the students know when it has been achieved. It's hard to know if you have "educated more students about the health center" but you know when you have increased participation in health-related events, enrolled 100 more students in the center, put up 100 posters about SBHCs, or talked to 50 percent of the teachers in your school about the SBHC.
3. **Make an action plan.** Have a conversation about how the youth group will meet their goals. Put some time into the questions you are asking. For example, students and even adults have a hard time answering questions like "How can we publicize the SBHC?" You're more likely to get useful responses by asking people about their personal experiences. For example, questions such as "How did you find out about the school-based Health Center?" or "Where do you go to find out what's happening around school?" may generate more discussion.
4. **End the meeting with forward momentum and action items for each member** (especially the brand new members!). These tasks can be small: ask your mom if the group can use the left over balloons from your party or post a message about the SBHC on your Facebook feed. Do your best to make sure everyone feels included and they know that their time and effort make a difference. The more roles people take on, the more likely they are to continue working with you – make sure your students feel important. Elect a note taker so action items can be followed up at the next meeting.



## Easy Ways to Promote Your School-Based Health Center

Here are a few ideas to get your group started:

- Create a Facebook page for your SBHC.
- Ask students to change their Facebook profile pictures and/or statuses to an image of or message about the SBHC.
- Create new posters about the SBHC and post them around the school.
- Add the SBHC hours to the school's daily announcements.
- Organize a "health week" where students present a healthy tip and SBHC information on school announcements every day for a week.
- Decorate the SBHC exterior to draw more attention.
- Talk to teachers before or after school about the SBHC and request time for students and SBHC staff to talk to their students about the health center.
- Hold an open house event in the SBHC (don't forget the healthy treats!). Invite parents, community members, legislators, and the media.
- Ask the school newspaper to write about the SBHC or write letters to the editor.
- Ask your principal to make an announcement promoting the SBHC.

### **Case Study: Health Ambassador Program in Cicero, IL**

The Health Ambassador Program was developed by Corazón Community Services and the Health Committee of the Cicero Youth Task Force in an effort to improve the health outcomes of Cicero's youth. The Health Ambassador Program offers in-depth, comprehensive education on pervasive adolescent health concerns. It also provides training to Cicero adolescents and parents on community health advocacy, as well as methods of peer-to-peer health education.

Youth and parent participation have been invaluable to the success of the program! Apart from attending monthly meetings and trainings, they lead health projects at their schools and throughout Cicero. With information they have learned from experts in the field and adequate guidance, the Health Ambassadors have been able to develop meaningful projects that have had a significant impact in the community, such as:

- Writing health articles published in the Morton East Newspaper and the Monthly Town of Cicero Newsletter, reaching over 20,000 households
- Recruiting and registering students to get services at the Morton East School Based Health Center
- Planning, promoting and conducting community wide Town Hall meetings on a variety of health topics
- Planning, promoting, and assisting in local Health Fairs, including the Town of Cicero Health Fair and the Town of Cicero Health & Services Fair
- Working on advocacy campaigns for the Morton East School Based Health Center
- Assisting in survey administration
- Implementing the Traffic Light Guide to Healthier Food Choices at three different afterschool sites in Cicero to help youth choose healthier foods

## **Case Study: Health Ambassador Program in Cicero, IL (cont'd)**

Health Ambassadors at Corazón Community Services have received training on numerous health topics, including but not limited to:

- Sexual Health Education
- Nutrition
- Advocacy & Peer Health Education
- The Importance of Primary Care
- School Based Health Center Initiatives
- Understanding Mental Health & Mental Illness
- Mental Illness Stigma Reduction
- Substance use / abuse
- Teen dating violence

The Health Ambassador program has become quite noticeable in the Cicero community. Local agencies and organizations and even the Town of Cicero Health Department have requested the help of the Ambassadors. In the future, they hope to have a retreat with the youth and parents in order to continue building their leadership skills. In addition, they will create a strategic plan that will help fortify the program.

Current Health Ambassador Break Down (all Cicero residents):

- (20) 10th grade – college students
- (10) 7th & 8th grade students
- (6) parents

## GYT Project

As part of the nationwide GYT (Get Yourself Tested) campaign and the CCHHS-wide GYT initiative, Corazón Community Services (CCS) and the Morton School-Based Health Center (SBHC), located in Morton East High School in Cicero, committed to testing 100 students and also increasing school-wide STI awareness during the month of April. Two weeks into their campaign, over 60 students were tested and more students were scheduled to come in by the end of the month. The campaign's success has been due in large part to the efforts of enthusiastic and committed student Health Ambassadors. These students are part of a community based program that mentors and supports youth in becoming health advocates. In preparation for the GYT campaign, they received training by CCDPH educators on STIs and guidance on how to reach out to their peers.

The Health Ambassadors manned a table in the school cafeteria during lunch periods, advertising the clinic's services and reached out to their fellow students about the importance of STI screening. Morton SBHC set aside extra walk-in appointments slots over the lunch hour and during supervision periods for students to come to the clinic for STI testing.

At the end of April, the Health Ambassadors had recruited 275 students to get tested for Gonorrhea and Chlamydia. One hundred and seventeen youth were tested and 13% of them were treated. Because of the overwhelming response and interest from the students, it was decided to extend testing through May so that those who did not have the opportunity to get tested would do so.

To learn more about the Health Ambassadors, visit <http://www.corazoncs.org/>.

## Peer-to-Peer Education

Another popular way to get youth involved in the SBHC is through **peer-to-peer education**. In this model, students focus on a particular health issue in their school and set out to teach their peers about this issue. Groups may focus on teen pregnancy, healthy eating, asthma, or teen dating violence, for example.

Peer education can mean doing large publicity like putting on events and creating posters, fliers, or videos about a particular issue. Peer education can also be more focused on small groups or individual persons. For example, students can make class presentations, run small discussion groups, or mentor younger students.

In many ways, starting groups using a peer-to-peer education model is much like starting a group to promote the SBHC:

1. **Make sure your student leaders know all the resources available at the SBHC and how to access those resources.** Even though the goal of this group isn't exactly to promote the SBHC, your group members will be seen as linked to the center, so they should know what services the SBHC provides and how to access them.
2. **Select a topic.** Work with the youth team to identify a few of the most pressing issues faced by students on campus and in the community. They may be able to better identify these after conducting a youth survey or several focus groups.
3. **Learn about the issue.** Take some time (maybe during a meeting, maybe in a month) to learn about the issue you've chosen. Invite speakers or other resource persons from other youth-serving organizations if you can.
4. **Make a plan.** As noted above, there are lots of ways to do peer education. Decide what exactly you want to do—a school wide event, a lunchtime group, a mentoring program, a media campaign—and set some goals and identify milestones on the way.
5. **Finally, just like in the SBHC Awareness Group, end each meeting with forward momentum and action items for each member.** Group members could look up an article about your topic, invite their friends to your next meeting, or create a Facebook group.

## **Resources**

### **Youth Action Research Institute (YARI)**

[www.incommunityresearch.org/research/yari.htm](http://www.incommunityresearch.org/research/yari.htm)

YARI supports, promotes and educates on youth-led action research for development, risk prevention, and social change. It promotes the use of action research for personal, group, and community development. Participants include children, preadolescents, and youth of diverse ethnic backgrounds as well as sexual minority youth. Resources available online through YARI include:

1. Empowered Voices: A Participatory Action Research Curriculum for Girls
2. Participatory Action Research Curriculum for Empowering Youth

**MTV**

<http://www.mtv.com>

Even MTV is involved in peer education programs. Check out their efforts (and affiliate your group if you want) here: <http://www.mtv.com/onair/ffyr/protect/takeaction.jhtml>

## Section 3: Recruiting and Retaining Youth Leaders

In order to have strong youth engagement programs, SBHCs must implement meaningful recruitment and retention strategies. These strategies boost young people's commitment to their SBHCs and support the sustainability of youth work.

### Youth Recruitment Overview

Successful recruitment strategies rely on the SBHC's familiarity with the school, faith-community, and environment in which it operates, as well as adult allies' abilities to cultivate leadership in youth from different academic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. Before youth recruitment can begin, SBHCs should have a clear purpose for their youth engagement efforts and must be mindful of how youth-driven these efforts will be. See "Adult Coordinator Role and Skills" section for more information on being an effective adult ally and youth facilitator.

### Where to Recruit Youth Leaders

SBHCs can look to existing youth programs, on-campus venues, and networks of young people to recruit leaders for their youth engagement work. **School youth leadership programs, community service clubs, sports teams, and after-school groups** can be convenient locations for identifying youth leaders.

More ideally, SBHCs can turn to their own **clients**, who can become inspiring champions for school health. Keen health center staff and adult allies can recognize emerging youth leaders: clients who hangout at the clinic, are knowledgeable of services, or demonstrate a desire for youth leadership opportunities can offer a genuine level of participation because of their familiarity with their center.

Additionally, youth who frequent **health center-sponsored events and activities** have the potential to be more deeply engaged in the SBHC and other adolescent health issues. SBHC staff should also seek students who may have demonstrated little involvement with the clinic yet could benefit from an empowering youth engagement opportunity and provide fresher perspectives on the site and program. Staff and adult allies can also look to **career-specific academic programs** that focus on health professions, public health, or biological sciences. Finally, **popular hang-out locations**, such as malls, entertainment spots, and community centers, are prime locations for setting up an informational table and flyering for recruitment.

### How to Recruit Youth Leaders

SBHCs can employ some of the following strategies to recruit young people for their emerging youth engagement programs:

- **On-campus outreach.** Look into posting flyers announcing the health center's new youth engagement opportunity. Flyers and pamphlets should convey the purpose of the group and highlight incentives for participation. For a sample pamphlet, go to

- **Classroom presentations.** SBHCs can coordinate with teachers to provide short in-class presentations on SBHC services and youth leadership work. You can also use this time to furnish informational brochures on the center and other adolescent health topics.
- **Recruitment drives.** SBHC staff can consider holding recruitment drives based on activities from the school year. An open house event is useful for introducing both the health center and the new youth engagement opportunity to students. Mass recruitment toward the end of sports seasons may also be ideal since youth can commit more time during the off-season.
- **Peer-to-peer word of mouth.** Youth social networks can bring strong youth teams. Engaged youth can promote SBHC activities amongst their peers and recruit their friends to participate. This recruitment strategy is especially optimal when those already-engaged youth can comfortably articulate their involvement to others.
- **Individual recruitment.** SBHC staff can personally invite youth they feel would benefit from leadership opportunities and meaningful engagement in SBHC work. Staff may also turn to school faculty for students they may recommend for the program. For successful individual recruitment, be mindful of taking on a guidance role for a young person who may be new to youth leadership work or facilitate a peer-to-peer partnership to ease familiarity with the emerging program.
- **Social media, videos, and film.** Try to utilize online platforms to reach greater audiences and generate discussion about the emerging program. During recruitment, you and other staff can consider sharing videos and photos from past youth engagement work, allied organizations, and other SBHCs to get young people excited and encouraged to participate.

### Things to Consider When Recruiting Youth

During the youth recruitment process, SBHCs should consider the following:

- **Determine the characteristics of the program:** How many youth will be recruited? Will there be gender balance in the group? Considering the demographics of the population served by the SBHC, is it important for the group to have diverse ethnic and socioeconomic representation? If so, how will the SBHC be mindful of this in its recruitment strategies?
- **Decide on an application process (competitive or voluntary):** What questions should the application include? Will applicants be interviewed? What established expectations will be shared with the applicants? Is there a need for parental consent or media waiver forms?
- **Hold an informational session or introductory meeting:** What is the basic structure of the group? How youth-led will the program be? How adult-led will it be? What are the incentives for youth involvement? Will there be stipends for the youth? Will community-service hours be offered? What commitments should youth expect to make in order to participate?

### Youth Retention Overview

In the beginning, youth activities in SBHCs may draw large initial interest from potential participants, and it is only natural that the number of youth may dwindle after the first meeting. Nevertheless, responsive and active retention strategies will keep those committed youth leaders engaged and connected to the group.

Once a team of young people has been formed, the team should establish a **group agreement** that incorporates the assets and expectations of its members. The agreement should include logistical expectations, be mindful of how much time youth can realistically devote to the group, and articulate the responsibilities of members and adult allies. This group agreement should be developed by the youth team to ensure group accountability and ownership of the work.

With regard to youth engagement work, SBHCs should always ask, “*What’s in it for youth?*” **Incentives**, such as food, stipends, or skills trainings, can be motivations for program participation. Resumé building, community service hours, and professional and social networking can also be reasons for involvement. Most importantly, the idea of contributing to school and community wellness is oftentimes incentive enough.

**Consistent communication and concrete activities** create a better sense of group meaning, direction, and work. The youth team should establish its meeting schedule and identify its most reliable method of communication. (Facebook and text messaging can be just as successful as e-mail or phone correspondence!) Youth-generated meeting schedules and activities increase self-efficacy and increase participants’ commitment to see their projects completed and successful. For long-term project plans, establishing several short-term objectives will foster a feeling of group progress and give more reason for sustained involvement.

Many youth teams implement a **peer-to-peer partnership model** that helps keep youth connected to one another and the responsibilities of their team. Well-connected youth teams are sensitive to members’ needs and can recognize when external factors become challenges to meaningful participation. Adult allies should uphold open communication between themselves and youth leaders and support an environment that gives youth the opportunity to candidly share their concerns.

Finally, be sure to **build a community** for your young people. Icebreakers, energizers, outings, and team-building activities will add to the development of a group that is cohesive, trustworthy, and enjoyable. SBHC staff, adult allies, and young people should schedule leisure time for the group and encourage activities that allow everyone to build friendly, positive rapport with one another.

### Youth Engagement Sustainability

SBHCs can consider the following ways to keep their youth engagement work sustainable beyond the first year of program implementation:

- **Grade-level/age variation.** Recruiting youth from different grade levels can prevent the “graduating out” effect that many youth programs encounter. Younger leaders can help sustain the program after their older peers have left school or pursued other activities.

Consider recruiting newly entering freshmen and sophomores for better program sustainability and fuller experience potential for the young people.

- **Correspondence.** Regular correspondence and check-ins remind adult allies and youth leaders of their participation in greater youth engagement work. Even a few casual check-ins during school breaks support a more personable group work ethic.
- **Youth-driven planning.** While many SBHCs must often take the initial steps toward youth engagement work, program planning should become progressively more youth-driven. Youth-driven recruitment, retention, and sustainability practices are part of genuine youth engagement. It can take a long time and sometimes be frustrating when the youth are most engaged by action. Figure out the best ways to balance youth planning with a structure and initial goals set by the adult ally.
- **Early and ongoing successes.** Make sure that ongoing and publically acknowledged successes are a mainstay in all forms of your group work. For example, if the SBHC implements a peer health education program, all participating students should be given a special award once they have completed their training and practice sessions. You can continue this positive work ethic by creating doable projects, sharing monthly highlights and providing encouraging feedback at meetings.
- **Group evaluation and assessment.** Consider facilitating an end-of-the-year or group project evaluation and assessment with SBHC staff and your group of youth. During the evaluation, be sure to reflect on initial group expectations and have everyone rate their overall experience. Assess your readiness for the upcoming year and think about what team practices should be maintained or improved upon, and whether new skills trainings should be included.



## Case Study: Maine East Township High School Park Ridge, Illinois

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) at the District 207 School Based Health Center in Park Ridge, Illinois was formed in 2006, when the staff recognized that the health center was lacking input from the population it was serving. The staff drafted a mission statement, a list of duties and responsibilities, criteria, an application and a parental consent form to begin the process. The minimum GPA was low for membership because staff wanted to have a diverse academic representation. Initial recruitment was done through fliers posted throughout the school, morning PA announcements, and individual recruitment. These efforts yielded about five students during that first year. It was a small group but the members were very dedicated and active. The second year was similar to the first with a slight increase in student membership.

The third year, staff engaged the health careers teachers in an effort to increase recruitment. The mental health counselor spoke to several classrooms about SAB and the advantages of joining. This was an ideal audience since most of the students were already interested in the health field and knew that this would be a good activity to add to college and employment applications. Approximately 30 students signed up. At the first scheduled meeting, about 15 members attended. By the third meeting about ten members attended and were retained for the remainder of the year. This last year, about 40 students signed up and the health center retained 15 members for the year.

The staff has learned several lessons over the years with regards to recruitment and retention:

- Advertising to a targeted audience, such as a health careers class, will produce a higher membership.
- Individual interviews were not necessary. After the first year, the staff learned from focus groups that interviews intimidated students and deterred them from applying.
- Meeting times must be convenient to maintain attendance.
- Officers are elected by member voting and are tasked to provide organization and a sense of leadership within SAB.

There are several activities that SAB members participate in throughout the year:

- Focus groups on adolescent health issues, accessibility and overall improvement of the health center;
- Designing promotional materials such as the website, brochures and t-shirts;
- Fundraising activities;
- Writing articles for the school newspaper;
- Lobbying during Advocacy Day at the State Capitol Building;
- Promoting the Health Center at School Health Fairs and educating the student body formally and informally about the services offered at the Health Center.

Members have expressed that the activities that interest them the most include participating in Advocacy Day and designing their own t-shirts/sweatshirts. These activities provide members with a sense of unity and pride.

The challenges encountered have included equal gender representation—about 99% of the participants have been female; recruitment of freshmen and sophomores (they found that upper classmen are typically more interested in boosting college applications); and recruitment from other schools within the district, as transportation proved to be a barrier to meeting attendance.

## Section 4: Developing Youth Leadership Skills

Developing youth leadership skills means guiding and training students to become more effective advocates, managers, and participants in school health center projects. Having student leaders who can motivate their peers and lead by example will make your youth group stronger and more effective; however, most leaders will not come out of the woodwork. Young people become leaders when they have the capacity, motivation, support, and opportunity to do so. Strong adult allies can work with youth to create these conditions and develop leaders.

### Key Concepts

#### **Look for leadership potential in everyone.**

Think of what a leader could do in your group. Not every student will feel comfortable leading a meeting or speaking at an event, but they may be able to talk to teachers about your project, or draft a letter to the school newspaper. It is worth your time to think about all the different leadership roles and make a list of ways students can get involved.

*“Leaders in a school health center setting may not fit the typical image of a school leader. Some of our most successful ‘leaders’ were recommended by their school health center staff simply because they were active users of the school health center . . . once they joined the Youth Advisory Council they took on more leadership, since they felt ownership of their SHC.”*

*- Megan Erskine, Project Coordinator, Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers, 2006-2010*

#### **Create opportunities for people to take on more responsibility.**

Students stay involved in activities because they feel like they are making a difference and learning new skills. Give EVERYONE a task at every meeting, even if that task is to put up a few posters or invite their Facebook friends to join the SBHC’s group online. After students have done one task (putting up posters, for example), ask them to take on something more challenging, like creating a poster, or going classroom-to-classroom to ask teachers to put posters in their room. This can also be accomplished by assigning roles such as note-taker, document reader, and chart writer.

*“Derrick, from Dunbar Vocational High School, was a junior when he joined YAC. He had asthma and came into the Dunbar SHC at least once a week. He was quiet at first, but he never, ever, missed a meeting or event. He could be counted on for ANYTHING. Within a year, he was a leader amongst his peers because he had the authority to speak on meetings or events, which the others had missed.”*

*- Megan Erskine, Project Coordinator, Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers, 2006-2010*

**Remember that students develop as leaders when caring adults take the time to give them meaningful feedback and build their confidence.**

Leaders are created by practicing leadership over and over again. It can be really difficult to find time to meet with youth individually, but it's crucial to make time. Plan to meet with your core leaders before every meeting for at least ten minutes. Additionally, be on the look out for impromptu individual meetings. These could happen while you're walking a student to their bus stop, while they help you gather materials for a meeting, or even walking with them to get a snack before or after a meeting. Be prepared for these "impromptu" individual meetings so you can give and receive feedback and information that you may not get in a group setting.

**Find opportunities for students to lead projects or activities.**

Sometimes it is much harder to support someone else's work than it is to do it yourself, but it's the only way to develop leaders authentically. If you ask a student to create a poster and then decide to do it yourself because the product is not done on time or well enough, it is unlikely that student will want to stay involved. When leaders do not come through on an assignment it is important to hold them accountable. At the same time, you may want to examine your own skills and the support of your youth team. Were your expectations clear? Did you give them a timeline and then follow up with them to ask if they needed extra support? Make sure young people have the skills and support needed to complete agreed upon activities.

**Offer lots of training and CLEAR guidance.**

Youth need training to understand policy issues, health issues, education models, and methods of effective publicity. Do these trainings yourself or ask an outside resource person to come speak so the youth feel confident in their knowledge and skills. Never ask a student to do something before explaining the whole process and asking for their feedback. This is as true for making posters as it is for leading a meeting or talking to legislators. If students are making posters, for example, make sure your students know how the posters will be used: Who is their target audience? Where will the posters be hung? Where are the materials for the posters? How many should they make? As tasks get more advanced, your trainings should as well. Taking the time to make sure students are 100 percent ready for each task will both boost their confidence and ensure their work is exactly what is needed.

*"Practice makes perfect! Any time we got a speaking opportunity, we had students attend. We had them speak on radio shows, public access TV, hearings, and even at our regional meetings. After an entire year of speaking engagements, our Youth Advisory Council participated in a city-wide Civics Fair. I literally cried when they were explaining their work to the judges because they sounded and acted like pros. They were using words like 'shovel-ready' and 'capital plan' and more importantly, they knew what these words meant. They were seriously student advocates."*

*- Megan Erskine, Project Coordinator, Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers, 2006-2010*

**Build community.**

Youth get involved in their SBHC for dozens of reasons including a teacher's encouragement, appreciation for SBHC services, passion for health care access, professional or volunteer incentives, or to be with their friends. Students may stay involved for a few months or even year because it is fun and they are learning, but students will stay involved for the long haul—

potentially even past graduation—if they find a community in the SBHC. It is easy to think about building community in the first few meetings with icebreakers and open discussion questions, but you should make an effort to continue building community every single meeting. Always have an icebreaker, and try to offer a social at least a few times a year for students to get to know each other.

### **Case Study: Profile of a young leader from the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers Youth Advisory Council**

Heather joined the city-wide Youth Advisory Council (YAC) during her junior year. She was recommended by her school health center's social worker. During the first YAC retreat, Heather and her friend were a bit unwilling to engage with the rest of the group, and left the retreat early. One of the YAC leaders, Christina, reached out to them after the retreat to assess their commitment to the group, and encouraged them to keep coming to meetings.

Heather showed up to one meeting and then dropped off again. Christina reached out to her to see what was going on and Heather told her that transportation was an issue. In reality, it was a combination of transportation and her original friend not wanting to do YAC anymore. Heather had a lot of potential, so Christina and I continued to reach out to her. By November, she was attending meetings more regularly and we had worked out a better transportation situation for her and her family.

We noticed Heather was really good at clearly explaining an issue or summarizing a topic to the rest of the group. We began giving her speaking roles at legislative meetings, at hearings, at civics fairs, etc. At first, she was really nervous about her role, as demonstrated by wanting to practice her speech over and over again in a hallway, or questioning if she could do it, but by the end of her senior year, not only was she our spokesperson, but the school invited her to be the student voice for all things school health center or student health. She met with elected officials, sponsors, and others, without the brokering of ICSHC. This, in the end, is the ultimate goal: we wanted to train YAC leaders to be the SHC leaders at their schools and give those school health centers a student they could count on.

Heather's buy-in was a result of adult encouragement, making relationships with the students from other schools, and realizing how important the project was. For each project or event, Christina and I made it seem like this was the most important thing the students could be doing with their time. We did weeks of prep before an event and took time to debrief afterwards. We found that students needed to be challenged, or they would lose interest; we asked students to dress-up for each event. Furthermore, impressing upon the students that they were leaders and challenging them to step up to fulfill that role brought them all closer together. Once they realized that YAC was not easy and that what they were doing was unique, they formed a bond beyond what school or neighborhood they came from.

Allowing Heather to step up in a role outside of the usual school sports and organizations allowed her to be someone else – a real leader and advocate.

## Case Study: Evanston Township High School

While we do not have a student health group at Evanston Township High School, we do work to keep students involved in the school health center (SHC). Every year the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers hosts SHC Advocacy Day. On this day, students from all over the state travel to Springfield to meet legislators and advocate for school health centers. Advocacy Day is an excellent tool for fostering empowerment through youth engagement in SHCs.

In order to find the perfect group of students for this activity, our health center partners with the teacher of a health-related elective course. This class consists of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students, most of whom are regular users of the SBHC. Once we identify interested students, we organize a series of meetings and trainings to take place in the months leading up to Advocacy Day.

Topics explored during these meetings include:

- General history of SBHCs
- History of our specific SBHC
- Benefits of SBHCs
- Advocacy
- Current legislation related to SBHCs
- Public speaking
- Professional behavior

During these meetings, students work with each other to create short speeches to be delivered to legislators on Advocacy Day. Students also make calls to legislators to set up meetings and inform them of the important work that will occur on Advocacy Day.

On Advocacy Day, students proudly represent SBHCs, the ICSHC and our school by advocating for a cause close to their hearts. For most students Advocacy Day is their first experience with political advocacy. Many students are shocked to be “taken seriously” in such a formal setting. Students continue the advocacy by sharing their stories with family, friends, and school staff, writing essays and papers about the experience, and developing skills to advocate for other important causes. Some students even come back for more the next year. And the experience does not stop there! After Advocacy Day, we have seen that youth express an increased interest in voting in local and federal elections, political and health related career opportunities, and advocacy for other social justice issues.

All in all, Advocacy Day encourages empowerment, develops important life skills, engages students in SHCs as well as local government and gives students a safe platform to express themselves. One student hit the nail on the head by telling me, “Advocacy Day taught me to stand up for what I believe in.” Based on that comment alone, Advocacy Day is a priceless youth engagement experience and I feel honored to be a part of it!

## Resources

Check out **CommonAction** for icebreakers and games.

<http://www.commonaction.org/gamesguide.pdf>

**The Mikva Challenge** is Chicago-based and focused, yet their resources can be useful to groups across the country.

<http://www.centerforactioncivics.org/>

**A Comparative Analysis of Community Youth Development Strategies** is a more academic look at youth development.

<http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP23Cao.pdf>

This article, written at Miami University in the **Wilks Leadership Institute**, focuses on college students, but can offer adults working with high school students a rich and complex view of what “leadership” means in a community.

[http://community.muohio.edu/wilks/sites/edu.wilks/files/Wilks%20Public%20Leadership%20Paper,%208.4.09\\_2.pdf](http://community.muohio.edu/wilks/sites/edu.wilks/files/Wilks%20Public%20Leadership%20Paper,%208.4.09_2.pdf)

## Section 5: Adult Coordinator Role

There are many different roles a good adult coordinator can play in youth organizations – the key is to decide which type of coordinator your group needs and to be intentional in your interactions with youth members and the group as a whole. Our intention here is to provide you with a framework to think about being an effective adult coordinator and give you some useful tips to get started.

The Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing gives three models for youth organizing. These descriptions are shortened; however, we encourage you to go to their website (see Resources section below) for more detailed descriptions and to consider where strategies can be combined and applied in your work:

### **Adult-Led Organizing Groups**

In this model, adult leaders seek out young people as core constituents. Young people carry out the strategies and tactics of a campaign or project; however, these strategies and tactics are generally developed by adults. Young people's efforts to influence the platform may be minimized in order to maintain campaign priorities. In these cases, young people are positioned as participants rather than key decision-makers.

### **Intergenerational Organizations**

In this model youth and adults form intergenerational partnerships that see youth and adults as equal partners in building and leading campaigns, and developing the organization. Youth and adults develop a common agenda without overly distinguishing youth concerns from adult concerns. Instead, groups work to actively mobilize, educate, and share power with a multi-age constituency.

### **Youth-Led Organizations**

Youth-led organizations typically depend on adults to provide organizing and administrative support. In this model, young people often share power and authority with adults based upon defined roles, responsibilities, and skills. Youth are trained and supported to conduct outreach, facilitate trainings, and coordinate campaigns and projects with their peers. When seeking to negotiate the expression of youth and adult voice and power, youth-led organizations make a point to defer to the vision and authority of young people.

Before you meet with the group, spend some time thinking about which model (or what combination of each model) will be used and consider the following questions:

- What type of decision-making power will youth have?
- Who will be the individuals leading/facilitating?
- Will youth decide what issues to take on or do you already know what projects you want them to take on?
- Will youth choose what tactics to use to implement the project?
- Will youth choose the project's goals?

- Be honest with yourself and the youth about what you expect from them and what they should expect from you.

For example, in 2010, the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers was fortunate to receive a grant to work on tobacco cessation and anti-tobacco marketing with their Youth Advisory Council (YAC). At their first meeting the adult coordinator talked about the aspects of the tobacco project that were already set in stone (for example, grant deliverables), but offered places where the YAC members could determine how and what activities they would conduct. The group did have to focus on social media and tobacco, but the members could choose whether they wanted to blog, make videos, or use twitter. It would have been disingenuous for the coordinator to tell the YAC members that they could decide what issue they wanted to work on.

If you know you want to have a peer-to-peer education group focused on a specific topic or using a particular model of education, be upfront about what has already been decided. Young people will appreciate your honesty. At the same time, make sure you find opportunities where young people's voices can be heard in the decision-making process. *Take some time before every meeting to consider when and how youth will have a decision-making role.*

#### *Tips*

- **Don't expect more from youth than you would from another adult.** Think of this: When a one young person shows up 15 minutes late for a meeting, an adult may think, "Ah hah, a slacker. She must not be dedicated to this group." When a fellow adult shows up 15 minutes late, the same person may think "That's understandable. They've got deadlines and pressures and schedules." So do young people.
- **Conversely, don't underestimate what young people can do.** Young SBHC users almost certainly have ideas about how to make the SBHC better or how to make their peers and school healthier. What they don't often have are opportunities to have their voices heard. When you give young people an opportunity to work on something they care about you may be amazed at their dedication and ingenuity.
- **Treat youth as individuals; don't make one young person represent all youth.** Consciously make sure you're not making your group members feel that they must speak for or represent all young people. Assure the young people that you are interested in their individual opinions and don't expect them to embody an entire population like all SBHC users, or all students at their school. If you do want to know the opinion of all SBHC users or students at your school, you may want to do a survey.
- **Be careful about interrupting.** No one likes to be interrupted, but often in our culture it is acceptable for adults to interrupt younger people. When interrupted by an adult, many young people will stop talking (sometimes permanently). A good adult coordinator must be hyper-sensitive about interrupting a young person and step back to be mindful of their authoritative space. Young people need to be motivated to persevere with their views and suggestions despite adult interruptions.
- **Receive feedback non-defensively.** Strong adult allies receive criticism, feedback, and evaluation from youth in a non-defensive manner. Make it a point to allow young people to give feedback without interruption and give credit to their opinions. Should you disagree with



their comments, work to find compromise and solutions together.

- **Remember that your role as an adult coordinator may be different from your normal role in the health center.** One purpose of youth-adult coordinator partnerships is to give young people a different way to relate to adults. Before you begin your youth group you may want to think about how being an adult coordinator complements your usual role at the health center, and how they may be at odds. For example, if you work as a mental health professional and in your role as an adult coordinator you encounter a student in need of mental health services, how will you handle that situation?
- **Share in both successes and failures.** While you and your team should celebrate successes, mistakes and failures should also be processed as a team. If the group fails to carry through on a project, be upfront with your young leaders about expectations and give them an opportunity to give feedback so they can fully commit to future projects. If you fail to meet your tasks, admit your weaknesses and invite feedback and criticism from your young people to promote bi-directional growth and learning.
- **Don't move too fast.** Don't move too fast without explaining the reasons for actions taken. Rushing through meetings can be a sign that adults are still trying to control the actions of the group.

Adapted from “Younger Voices, Stronger Choices,” Kansas City, Promise Project, a Joint Effort of the Junior League of Kansas City, MO. Inc. and Kansas City Consensus, 1997.

## Resources

The **Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing** implemented a study on youth organizing strategies and tactics. This document can provide you with a theoretical basis for youth organizing and help you to frame your own youth work.

[http://www.fcyo.org/media/docs/8141\\_Papers\\_no1\\_v4.qxd.pdf](http://www.fcyo.org/media/docs/8141_Papers_no1_v4.qxd.pdf)

## Section 6: Cultivating Parent Support

One great advantage of the SBHC model is that it both acknowledges and advances the school's place as the heart of a community. It is important, if not essential, to include the broader community in your youth work. Parents are a great place to start cultivating the support.

It can be difficult to get parents involved in the SBHC for many reasons. In this tough economy, parents are working longer hours. Parents may feel disconnected from their teens. Some parents feel like the issues their children face are new and different from the issues they faced as a child or adolescent. For example, children today are faced with issues stemming from social media and the internet. They may feel their teens don't want them involved or there could be a language barrier between parents and the school personnel.

Finally, with respect to confidentiality and sensitive services, it is important to emphasize that SBHCs provide high quality primary medical care and uphold the state-mandated rights of young people like other trusted health care institutions.

### *Tips for Parent & Community Involvement in Your Youth Program*

- Go to parents where they are (e.g., churches, libraries, restaurants, grocery stores, social services agencies)
- Acknowledge that some parents have had negative experiences at the school. Schools can be uncomfortable for parents, particularly if most of their experiences were about their child's academics or discipline. Make sure they feel truly invited and welcomed into the space
- Host a parent/teen retreat
- Invite parents, family, and community to a showcase of your youth-led projects
- Be accessible and available: always keep parents in the loop about your meetings and events
- Use all available modes of communication: email, phone, text, website, newsletter
- Provide resources for parents/community members whenever possible (books, pamphlets, information about community events, etc)
- Create a calendar at the beginning of the year with important dates on it for distribution
- Make sure your events are at a time that is convenient for working parents
- Make ways for parents to get involved outside of the school day
- Ensure student confidentiality
- Facilitate parent-teen communication activities that develop skills to recognize and respect differing perspectives
- Distribute packets that include parent consent forms and other related SBHC information
- Suggest that youth lead parent outreach

## Resources

The **Parent Teacher Association (PTA)** is a wealth of information on parent involvement. Here is just one link to get you started:  
[http://www.pta.org/family\\_school\\_partnerships.asp](http://www.pta.org/family_school_partnerships.asp)

**The National Network of Partnership Schools' *Promising Partnership Practices*** website is a collection of stories from community organizations and schools about their partnership experience.  
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/PPP/2008/index.htm>

While most resources on parental involvement are geared towards teachers, **Teach Hub** provides basic information on parent engagement, including a guide called "Nine Steps to Parental Involvement."  
<http://www.teachhub.com/news/article/cat/14/item/329>

## Section 7: Youth Leadership Networks

Youth leadership networks give SBHCs and young people the opportunity to unite and collaborate with other individuals and groups that are doing related work and can provide different perspectives on projects. Networks allow youth to share their school-based or local activities, best practices, and collective encouragement towards the common school health cause. Youth networks provide a strong base when pursuing advocacy mobilizations and facilitate the organization of youth in local, state, and national policy arenas.

### *Creating Opportunities for Cross-Fertilization and Training*

Just like professional networking, youth networking can lead to valuable cross-fertilization of skill sets best practices, and mentorship. By developing relationships with other groups of youth, proactive adult coordinators can identify opportunities for their young people to share expertise with or gain new information from these other groups.

As an adult ally, work with your youth to identify their interests and assets. This inventory can help you in prioritizing relationship building and network targeting. For example, if your program specializes in peer-to-peer nutrition education, you might consider finding opportunities for your youth group to share their experience and knowledge with other start-up peer programs. When you want to grow a new component of your youth program, you should identify youth-savvy resource people and other youth-led programs that can share their experience. This type of cross-fertilization will not only boost the young people's ownership and familiarity with their program, it will also maintain an ethic of ongoing skill development and function as a meaningful incentive to stay involved.

### **Case Study: Creating Opportunities for Cross-Fertilization and Training I**

When young people from Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!) began their efforts to start a school health center in Wake County, North Carolina, they looked to Riverbank High School's Step by Step, an afterschool program in Riverbank, California, for guidance on their start-up initiative. The YES! adult coordinator learned about the Riverbank youths' successful five-year endeavor to start a school health center on their campus at the 2010 National School-Based Health Care Convention in Washington, D.C. Following the convention, youth from both programs participated in a panel-like conference call, which was a fertile venue for in-depth Q&A and peer-to-peer motivation. The call was facilitated by a school health colleague from California, who structured the panel primarily on the youth participants. Using online social networking sites, both programs remain abreast of each other's local activities and successes.

## Case Study: Creating Opportunities for Cross-Fertilization and Training II

After winning a major victory to integrate minor consent education in the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) health education curriculum in 2007, the Balboa High School Teen Health Center Youth Advisory Board was appointed by SFUSD to conduct trainings to faculty, district wellness staff, and students on California minor consent laws. The Youth Advisory Board developed a “training of the trainers” to assist youth and adult allies with teaching minor consent in a youth-friendly manner. Other school health center youth engagement programs have requested training from the Youth Advisory Board in an effort to increase their own knowledge of minor consent policy, build partnerships with the Balboa Teen Health Center youth, and develop a stronger alliance of local school health centers. The Balboa Teen Health Center adult coordinator plays an active role in promoting the youth-led training to local school health centers, the Balboa campus, and other youth-serving organizations.

### Convening Local Youth Leaders

SBHCs should consider developing relationships with other local youth teams working on school, adolescent health, and other related issues. These relationships are particularly important for the young people, who may experience similar environmental conditions and share common knowledge of their community. Their shared experiences allow them to develop programs and reflect on their work with an understanding of each other’s built environment. An in-person, phone, or online gathering of local youth can demonstrate the joint effort for school health, as well as inspire individuals to think more broadly about their community.

Before you plan a local convening, you should consider the following:

- **Who’s who, what’s where?** Are there other SBHCs in your city, county or region that have youth engagement programs? What are the local youth-serving organizations? What resources do other community groups provide? Are there any available youth-friendly or youth-led trainings in the area? Is there an upcoming event that would offer an opportunity for your team to network with other local youth?
- **Convening objectives and outcomes.** In addition to the benefits described here, you should ask your youth what the overarching goals and outcomes should be for their convening. Will they gain new skills? Will they promote their program or upcoming event? Will they make new friends or increase their social network? Do they have plans for future collaboration with other groups?
- **Logistics and available resources.** Who will host the convening? Can your program organize an in-person meeting? What are the associated venue and transportation logistics? Will refreshments or food be provided (strongly recommended)? Can your program organize an over-the-phone or online conference gathering? Do all the parties involved have the appropriate technology to participate? Are there organizations or businesses in the community that could provide in-kind donations (e.g., refreshments, space, travel vouchers)?

Cooperative adult allies are crucial to a successful local youth convening. Depending on the age range and needs of a group, adult allies are necessary for fine-tuning logistics. More

importantly, for youth leadership networks to be built and sustained, adult allies should be accommodating where young people's resources may be lacking, for instance with the convening venue, meeting supplies, refreshments, and especially with coordinator-to-coordinator correspondence.

### **Case Study: Convening Youth Leaders I**

In Northern California, SBHC coordinators from the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) recognize the importance of connecting their youth programs to one another. In 2009, members of Pinole Valley High School Students Helping Other People (SHOP) paid a visit to the Kennedy High School Youth Advisory Board to learn from Kennedy's more established youth engagement program. The adult allies of both programs scheduled the visit after the Pinole Valley coordinator realized the Kennedy team could share valuable information with her SHOP youth. The SHOP adult coordinator chaperoned the youth to their afterschool convening at Kennedy High School, where the youth leaders discussed project ideas, communications basics, and the Kennedy youth program model.

In 2011, WCCUSD youth teams collaborated again, when members of the Hercules Middle/High School Youth Advisory Board visited new recruits to the De Anza High School youth program. The De Anza SBHC coordinator requested that the Hercules team, with its adult ally, visit the De Anza campus and share its thoughts on the importance of youth engagement at an SBHC and what kinds of projects youth teams could pursue.

### **Case Study: Convening Local Youth Leaders II**

In April of 2010, the California School-Based Health Alliance Youth Board brought high school youth representatives from across the San Francisco Bay Area to participate in "Reach and Connect: Fresh Ways to Build Stronger Partnerships in Our Communities," the youth track component of California School-Based Health Alliance's Northern California regional conference. Youth Board members developed the agenda and workshop content for the youth track and collaborated with California School-Based Health Alliance on logistics planning. One month prior to the event, the Youth Board invited high school-based health centers with existing youth engagement programs to send youth leaders along with their adult allies. The Youth Board-facilitated youth track offered an inviting space for the young people to share their leadership work, discuss on-campus public health communication strategies, and build relationships through common experiences. Participants left feeling appreciative of the youth-friendly space and warm, honest environment provided by the Youth Board.

### **State-Level Mentorship for Local Programs**

Statewide school health associations can play a critical role in facilitating partnership-building among SBHC youth engagement programs. Since state associations are poised to know where the youth engagement programs are, they can cultivate enough information to lead or support youth leadership networks. Furthermore, statewide conferences and meetings are excellent for bringing youth leaders together and giving young people the chance to share their successes, resources, and information with one another. For examples of state-level mentorship for youth leadership networks see case studies below.

## **Case Study: State-Level Mentorship for Local Programs**

In 2010, the California School-Based Health Alliance launched the Youth to Youth (Y2Y) Network, which connects youth engagement programs across the state and keeps them connected to the broader school health movement. In addition to its Facebook page, the Y2Y Network links young people at California School-Based Health Alliance's regional conferences and local meetings, and provides skills trainings to youth teams based on their needs and requests. Through the Y2Y Network, California School-Based Health Alliance and its Youth Board work to share local youth-led efforts on a statewide level and create a unified force for school health in California.

Y2Y Membership is two-tiered: youth teams can apply to be Y2Y Affiliate Programs or Y2Y Network Members. As Affiliates, programs are paired with a California School-Based Health Alliance Youth Board member, who functions as a liaison between the site and the organization. The application for Affiliate Program status is competitive, while Network Membership is open to all interested school health centers with existing youth engagement programs.

To develop the initial Y2Y membership base, California School-Based Health Alliance sent the Y2Y information and application forms to all its lead school health contacts within the organizational network. California School-Based Health Alliance also sent personal appeals to sites to participate in the opportunity. Within one month, California School-Based Health Alliance accepted five Affiliate Programs and began its network with a total of 13 youth teams.

The Alliance and its Youth Board members are in regular correspondence with the Y2Y Affiliates and provide general updates to the Y2Y Network via Facebook. As a benefit to the Y2Y Affiliates, California School-Based Health Alliance also sends monthly updates on adolescent and school health opportunities for youth leaders. Additionally, Y2Y Affiliates are invited to participate in California School-Based Health Alliance's regional conferences as both presenters and youth track attendees.

For California School-Based Health Alliance, the Y2Y Network has proven to be a useful tool for grassroots organizing and maintaining deeper connections with the youth-led school health field and their associated SBHCs. The Y2Y Network has also been vital for connecting youth teams that are working on similar projects or campaigns. As the hub of information for youth-led school health work in California, California School-Based Health Alliance has taken on the responsibility of forming relationships between teams of youth so they can gather insight and enthusiasm from one another.

### **Case Study: Beyondmedia Education *HIV: Hey, It's Viral!***

In 2008, Beyondmedia Education initiated a partnership with About Face Youth Theatre (AFYT) and Broadway Youth Center (BYC) in Chicago to develop a project addressing the history of HIV and AIDS. They gathered 25 young participants, ages 15-21, and discovered the participants lacked a general understanding of how HIV is prevented. These young participants expressed that the lack of preventative knowledge was a result of the lack of sexual health information they received at school. They had more questions than they had answers, but many of these participants were uncomfortable asking those questions.

Salome Chasnoff, Executive Director of Beyondmedia Education, discussed the issue with her partners at AFYT and BYC and decided to switch the goal of the initial project from a history project to a sexual education video and curriculum. The 25 young participants gathered together to brainstorm a way to approach the project; they came to a consensus that the documentary needed to be filmed from a youth perspective. They wanted the film to dispel the common myths youth have about the contraction of HIV and include particular risks for LGBTQ youth. The premise of the project was to educate youth about harm reduction, safer sex practices, encouraging self-respect and promoting responsibility. All 25 youth participated in the filming process, either behind the scenes or in front of the camera, making the film an educational and fun experience. The result was *HIV: Hey, It's Viral!* – a 20 minute sexual education video, a 75-page educator's curriculum and a Youth Activist Guide for young people who want to get involved in HIV/AIDS activism.

The documentary united these 25 young participants, providing for them an opportunity for leadership among their peers. The goal of the *HIV: Hey, It's Viral!* project was to not only educate the workshop participants, but to educate other youth and adults that do not receive the information they need about safer sex. Their hard work and creative effort did not go unnoticed. In 2009, Chicago Public Schools approved the film to be a part of their sex education curriculum and every public high school received a free copy of the DVD and curriculum. *HIV: Hey, It's Viral!* is making a difference by promoting responsibility and education and is a prime example of what happens when young people work together to initiate change.

#### **What the Project is:**

In 2008, Beyondmedia Education produced the groundbreaking sex education documentary *HIV: Hey It's Viral!* in collaboration with About Face Youth Theatre and Howard Brown Health Center. *HIV: Hey It's Viral!* works to reach youth of all sexual orientations - it's one of the few sexual education films that feature youth of color and is LGBT-inclusive. The film uses first-person narratives and accessible language to teach the facts of HIV and the impact HIV/AIDS has on real young people's lives.

To learn more about this project, visit [www.HIVHeyItsViral.org](http://www.HIVHeyItsViral.org).  
To learn more about Beyondmedia Education, visit [www.beyondmedia.org](http://www.beyondmedia.org).



## Resources

### **California Center for Civic Participation**

<http://www.californiacenter.org/>

Based in Sacramento, the California Center for Civic Participation oversees several statewide youth programs that bring together youth from multiple communities. For several years, the California Center coordinated the Policy Leadership Program on School Health, which trained and convened high school youth engagement programs from different regions for school health advocacy. With expertise in youth development and youth engagement, the California Center trains its youth networks for grassroots work, as well local and state-level policy actions.

### **Communities Adolescents Nutrition Fitness**

<http://canfit.org/>

California-based CANFIT offers trainings and resources on developing youth networks, especially surrounding issues of food justice, physical activity, and the built environment. One of CANFIT's initiatives, MO Project Youth Convening [link: <http://canfit.org/moproject/>], is an interactive, culturally relevant set of trainings that enables young people to use multimedia and online platforms to connect with other youth leaders to further their community health work. CANFIT collaborates with community and youth-serving organizations to host regional MO Project activities and other e-advocacy efforts.

## Section 8: Communicating and Promoting Youth Engagement Efforts

Communicating and promoting youth engagement successes can bring support from the broader community, present and future SBHC advocates, as well as partner organizations and foundations. More importantly, celebrated and showcased successes help validate youth work and encourage others to recognize the value of meaningful youth engagement.

Oftentimes, great local youth work goes unnoticed until assertive allies, advocates, and youth take the communications initiative. Adult allies and SBHC staff should consider the following platforms for sharing their youth engagement efforts, while youth should be empowered to promote their school health work to broader audiences.

### Conference Workshops, Presentations, and Rallies

Conferences can be appropriate venues to share the process and breadth of youth engagement work. Adult allies should be proactive about bringing materials on their youth programs, collaborating with other youth programs to lead a workshop or discussion on youth engagement, and encouraging youth leaders to engage with conference attendees and lead presentations. In addition to the networking and program recognition, conferences can offer skill-building opportunities for youth.

Rallies can also be an inspiration-filled venue to showcase the magnitude of youth voice to garner more support from both young people and adults. Youth should be at the forefront of rally planning and facilitating. This concrete and oftentimes energetic spectacle can draw media attention and publicly highlight great youth engagement work.

### Web and Analog Communications

Youth voice and youth engagement work should become a part of a SBHC's standard communications work. Website updates and e-mail communications should include news on the progress and plans of the youth program at the SBHC. Analog communications, such as newsletters, midyear and year-end letters, campus newspapers and publications, and handouts, should also make mention of the youth work happening at the site.

Youth can support this by disseminating their communications pieces and blurbs to the field and community. Adult allies should ask for written and creative updates from the youth team and include them in health center communications. Again, this should become a standard practice for the center and can also be viewed as a skill-building exercise for youth.

### Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites, like Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter, are useful platforms for sharing brief messages, photos, videos, useful images, and related media. Youth and adults should utilize this kind of user interface to draw attention to upcoming events and successes. For helpful examples, check out these program web pages:

**Facebook:** California School Based-Health Alliance: [www.facebook.com/schoolhealthcenters](http://www.facebook.com/schoolhealthcenters)

**Twitter:** <http://twitter.com/#!/@sbh4ca>

### Communications Tips

- **Consider your audience and choice of media.** Are your communications directed towards young people? School health professionals? Community stakeholders? Legislators? Even with a varied audience, how can your message and successes be clearly articulated to all?
- **Uplift youth-generated communications and promotion.** Are youth interested in sharing their achievements with others? Are they well equipped to produce communications pieces? What resources do they need?

### **Case Study 1: Conference Workshops and Presentations**

In 2011, the California School-Based Health Alliance hosted a youth-led plenary session at each of its three regional conferences. “Keepin’ It Grassroots—Youth Action in School Health” featured California School-Based Health Alliance Youth to Youth (Y2Y) Network Affiliate Programs from Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Central Valley SBHCs. Each plenary showcased two to four youth programs and had youth program representatives share their projects and school health work with over 140 adult attendees at each regional conference.

At the end of each plenary, conference attendees were invited to participate in the succeeding workshop, “In Discussion: Youth Leading the School Health Movement,” for an intimate dialogue between high school youth and their adult allies. Both sessions were facilitated by members of the California School-Based Health Alliance Youth Board, who also acted as mentors to each of the sites as they prepared their presentations leading up to the conference.

Planning for the sessions spanned five months and included program outreach, monthly e-mail check-ins, Youth Board member meetings with sites, and California School-Based Health Alliance -facilitated team trainings. At the conferences, youth presenters also participated in a youth track geared towards plenary and workshop preparation, networking, and advocacy skills training. Youth Board members developed the plenary and workshop agendas and led the majority of the youth track.

“Keepin’ It Grassroots” and “In Discussion” were particularly useful for school health professionals to understand the utility and breadth of youth engagement work. The young people’s perspectives inspired conference goers to support or pursue youth engagement work at their own SBHCs or start-up initiatives, especially as the young people described the variety of events and program models other sites could replicate. Most importantly, the conferences gave youth the opportunity to share their campus-based work with the larger

## **Case Study 2: Social Media and Social Marketing**

California School-Based Health Alliance partnered with Communities \* Adolescents \* Nutrition \* Fitness (CANFIT) for 2011 to launch CANFIT's MO Project at three Los Angeles SBHCs. The MO Project, a series of youth trainings on social media and social marketing for nutrition and physical activity, teaches youth how to communicate and promote wellness to their peers and community and share the highlights of their program progress.

The MO Project Healthy Youth Leaders Model consists of four skill-building and leadership trainings: Empowering Youth to Become Health Leaders in Their Community, Youth Policy Advocacy Using Media and Storytelling, Enhancing Communication and Presentation Skills, and Youth Mentorship, the final training wherein youth learn how to share the content of the three previous trainings to their peers.

As part of the curriculum, youth launch their own social marketing campaign using social media and community outreach tools. The campaign also includes an online media contest, where MO Project participants invite other youth to submit a creative media piece that promotes adolescent wellness. MO Project youth designed the contest website using a template developed by a collaborating web designer, and with the help a graphic artist, created the contest flier.

Throughout their partnership, California School-Based Health Alliance and CANFIT helped identify opportunities for youth from the three participant SBHCs to share their growth with the MO Project. In addition to California School-Based Health Alliance's Los Angeles regional conference and 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial Childhood Obesity Conference in San Diego, youth promoted their activities online through Facebook, Twitter, and other social sharing websites. Project staff taught the youth participants how to track and set goals for their communications activities. Throughout the program, adult allies and youth worked to spread the word about the MO Project on school campuses and with partner organizations. These promotional activities let the youth understand the expanse of their project and the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns, and allowed them to share their work with young and adult audiences.

### Media Coverage

Another way to publicize your youth group is through the media. You may be surprised how easy it can be to get media coverage. Many of the things your youth group does each year are probably "newsworthy." For example, reach out to the media about an open house, community meeting, the launch of a new campaign or initiative, or political events, such as the introduction or passage of a bill that relates to school health centers.

### Tips on How to Get Media Coverage

Once you've decided that your event is newsworthy, start looking at the news outlets in your area. Have your students look at where their community members get their news. Maybe it's a local paper, a larger regional paper, or the local television station. In any case, start making a list of what outlets are around you. Don't forget online blogs. As you are making your list of outlets, note which journalist tends to cover health, youth, or education. Many papers have one journalist focus exclusively on health, for example. You would want to contact that person directly about your events.

Next, write a media advisory, or ask a student to write it. A media advisory is just the nuts and bolts of your event: it whets a journalist's or editor's interest so they will come to your event or call you for an interview, so you don't want to give too much away.

### Sample Media Advisory

For Immediate Release  
DATE

For further information, contact:  
NAME, XXX-XXX-XXXX

### **Media Alert** **Students Rally for Better Health Care in Schools**

**Who:** One hundred students from ten Chicago area high schools will join a rally in support of school health centers. Students will be joined by Deputy Mayor Cristal Thomas, other elected officials, healthcare providers, school staff and members of the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers, a project of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition.

**What:** Students will be at the State Capitol Building as a part of School Health Center Advocacy Day to learn about the legislative process, rally and chant, and ask legislators to support school health centers in the state budget

Last year alone, 53 school health centers in Illinois reported 86,897 students enrolled to receive services and students visited their school health centers over 97,300 times for medical, mental, oral health and health education services.

**Photo Opportunity:** See 200 students in red t-shirts congregate in the capital rotunda of the capital with 2 foot tall student-made paper "keys" and signs demonstrating the importance of their school health center.

**Where:** Illinois State Capitol Rotunda, Springfield, Illinois

**When:** Tuesday, April 12, 2011  
12:00-12:30pm - Students will host rally in support of health care in schools.

**Why:** Health centers act like a doctor's office within a school, and they are often located in underserved areas. With a growing unemployment rate contributing to the loss of health care for working families, school health centers are more important than ever to help provide health care to children and youth in Illinois.

School health centers are unique models of care that provide comprehensive health care services including physicals, immunizations, mental health counseling, asthma care, nutrition counseling and oral health care. The primary recipients of school health center services, children and adolescents, are a population that are the least likely to seek out medical care elsewhere. School health centers can help improve Illinois' health care and education infrastructure for at risk families.

Members of the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers request the state maintain funding for school health centers so these centers can continue to work to improve student health and academic success.

Please visit [www.ilmaternal.org](http://www.ilmaternal.org) for more information about School Health Centers.

Call, or have your students, call the media outlets to make sure they got your media release. Most outlets won't commit to running a story over the phone, but calling to follow up does mean they will open your email and take the time to look at the media advisory. That alone can make a big difference.

Many news outlets are under-staffed and no longer have the capacity to come to community events. This doesn't mean they won't cover your event. The day of or the day after your event, send a media release to all the outlets in your area. A media release is the story exactly as you would like them to print it.

### Example 1

#### **Wake Youth Celebrate School-Based Health Care Awareness Month**

*Action Now! Youth plan tours of health centers for legislators and community members*

*RALEIGH, N.C. – February 14, 2011 – This month, Raleigh youth will join national efforts to educate their respective communities about the necessity in improving school-based health care and increasing access to care for young people. A group of Wake County teens called Action Now!, are especially enthusiastic about National School-Based Health Care Awareness Month because they want a school-based health center of their own.*

*Doug Pluta, a freshman at Enloe High School says Action Now! will follow the lead of other groups around the country by setting up tours of school health centers so that legislators and decision-makers can see how such centers may benefit Wake County students. "These tours are a great way to draw attention to our project," Pluta says.*

*Yet youth are not the only ones who believe that school-based health care should be a priority for the county.*

*Wake County Health Director Sue Lynn Ledford "Regardless of the quality of the educational facility or the teachers, unless children are safe, emotionally secure and physically healthy, they cannot learn at an acceptable pace."*

*In a recent interview with Newsradio 680 WPFT, Program Director Parrish Ravelli said that in the coming months, the group will plan face-to-face meetings with their legislators to educate them on the ways in which school health centers not only keep students in school, but dramatically help to save the state money.*

*"There are roughly 16,000 uninsured youth in Wake County," says Ravelli. "The new reassignment plan might mean that a disproportionate number of these students may funnel into one or two schools. School-based health centers offer a critical resource for these families."*

*Ledford asserts that school-based health services allow appropriate links to necessary service interventions. "Families need that linkage," she says.*

*School-based health centers are proven to decrease school absenteeism and increase graduation rates. There are currently 53 effective health centers in North Carolina, however, none in Wake County.*

*“It’s time that we step up and make our voice heard about a decision that can change our health, our education and our future,” says Shaquita Williams, a junior at Knightdale High School.*

*Tours of Wake Teen Medical Services, a school-linked health center located on an off-campus property, will be held February 21<sup>st</sup> from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tours of Durham Wellness Center, a school-based center located in Southern High School, will be held February 28<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. For more information about tours, contact Parrish Ravelli at [parrish@youthempowerededsolutions.org](mailto:parrish@youthempowerededsolutions.org).*

#### *About Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!)*

*Youth Empowered Solutions (YES!) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that empowers youth, in partnership with adults, to create community change. The specific programs that YES! implements to empower youth in their local and state advocacy efforts are aligned with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Division of Adolescent and School Health’s prioritization of critical adolescent health behaviors. These are: alcohol and drug use, injury and violence (including suicide), tobacco use, nutrition, physical activity, and sexual risk behaviors/reproductive health. Action Now! is a YES! program that creates community change by advocating for a school-based health center in Wake County.*

#### Example 2

*For more information contact:*

*NAME: XXX-XXX-XXXX*

#### ***High School Students Say Keep School Health Centers in the Budget*** *200 Students, Teachers, and Health Care Providers Rally at the State Capitol*

*Springfield, IL - On Tuesday, a sea of red advanced upon the Capitol Rotunda as 200 people, mostly high school students in red t-shirts, chanted “We are the Advocates for SHCs!” School Health Centers (SHC) are like a doctor’s office within a school, and are predominantly located in underserved areas. On School Health Center Advocacy Day, students from across the state traveled to Springfield to advocate for school health center funding.*

*The event was organized by the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers (ICSHC), a project of Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition. “Too many people, especially children and teens, don’t have a place to receive preventive and primary care,” said Deputy Governor Cristal Thomas, speaking to the students. “And we know that the most convenient way for you to receive these services is to bring it to you, because if screenings, immunizations, mental health and other services are available in your communities and your schools, you are more likely to get them. That’s why school health care centers are so important.”*

*Currently, Illinois is home to 59 SHCs in urban, suburban, and rural communities-- and the number is growing.*

*“School health centers reduce the burden on our health care system by saving an estimated \$5.5 million per year by providing preventative care and reducing emergency room visits,” said Divya Mohan Little, Project Director at the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers. “We know this is a difficult budget year, but we hope legislators will realize that families across the state are also experiencing tough financial times. These health centers play a critical role in the lives of children and adolescents whose families are experiencing hardships.”*

*Last year alone, SHCs in Illinois saw over 97,000 visits for medical, mental, oral health, and health education services. The students in Springfield asked that the state maintain funding for SHCs and continue its commitment to improve student health and academic success.*

*"My school health center has helped me get through school," said Sergio Hernandez, a student at Uplift Community High School in Chicago and a member of ICSHC's Youth Advisory Council addressed the group. "I feel lucky that my school has a school health center and I hope that someday more students have access to these resources."*

*For more information on school health centers, visit the Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers at <http://www.ilmaternal.org/SHC/>*

After you send your media release, call through your media list again to make sure they received your release and check the paper! If a journalist covers your story favorably, send them a thank you email.

#### *Letters to the Editor*

If your local paper doesn't write a story about your school health center, your students can write it themselves! Letters to the editor are a great way to educate the public about issues and they are easy to write. Letters to the editor are very short, between 150-200 words and should stick to one main point like "school health centers save the state money" or "school health centers help students stay in school."

#### Example 1 (Shared by [www.youthempowerededsolutions.org](http://www.youthempowerededsolutions.org))

*I'm a student and also a teen. I've recently watched Raleigh's residents re-enter their damaged community. At school, I saw all the horrific damages. Many students were affected by the tornado. Some experience loss of power, hot water, food, clothes and even a home.*

*It is more important now than ever to help support the establishment of a school-based health center (SBHC) on the grounds of a Wake County school.*

*SBHCs are designed based upon the community's needs. They provide students with a place to take a shower, get a change of clothes or even to talk to a counselor if they're feeling overwhelmed. Those who need to rest their head for a couple of hours while at school can also go to the center. Students who may have a chronic illness and lose their medication from the storm could receive the proper care from the SBHC.*

*When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, their SBHCs were the main way that they delivered health care to people in need. They became emergency clinics and supported the local community as it got back on its feet. A SBHC can provide students with a support system while at school from the devastating storm.*

*Dynasty Winters  
Raleigh*

Like any other form of media, LTEs are more likely to be printed if you follow up. Have your student call the paper after they submit their letter to make sure it went through.



### **Final Thoughts**

As the primary stakeholders in SBHCs, youth can offer critical support in SBHC development and service delivery, as well as advocacy for school-based health services. Effective SBHCs already understand how necessary it is to have youth participation in decision-making processes and to engage youth in various aspects of the health center. If we engage youth we'll have stronger school-based health centers, a more sustainable movement, and, most importantly, healthier kids.