

PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship

A Model to Support & Engage Young People in Adolescent Health Conversations at Community & State Levels

An Innovation Station Promising Practice

Purpose: This document supports MCH professionals to implement a practice found in Innovation Station. This resource provides the information needed to replicate the practice and is divided into two sections: the first section provides a high-level overview of the practice while the second section describes how to implement the practice. For additional information on any of the content provided below, please reach out to the practice contact located at the bottom of this document.

Section I: Practice Overview

Location:	Wisconsin	Title V/MCH Block Grant Measures Addressed
Designation:	Promising	NPM 10: Adolescent Well-Visit NPM 12: Transition
Date Submitted:	10/2020	<i>Note: This model is designed to elevate youth voice in local- and state-based adolescent health initiatives. Thus, it is transferrable across all strategies and activities addressing adolescent health (e.g., 7.2: Injury Hospitalization – Ages 10-19; 8.2: Physical Activity – Ages 12-17; and 9: Bullying). To date, the PATCH Program, at large, has partnered to address the following measures in our home state of Wisconsin.</i>

Practice Description

The Wisconsin PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship empowers young people, ages 12-21, to grow as leaders and young activists by making their voices heard in community and state level conversations. They provide advice and input on goals, decisions, initiatives, and practices that impact the health of their generation. The Fellowship spans the course of 9-months (September – May) with paid engagement and learning via training, enrichment meetings, individual learning modules, and the development of an individual Community Advocacy Project. Youth Advocates also serve as consultants, bringing youth voice to the projects and initiatives of individuals, organizations, and systems working to improve adolescent health throughout Wisconsin.

Purpose: The PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship was created to support Wisconsin’s Adolescent Health Program. It strives to bring youth voice to the forefront of adolescent health conversations while also providing young people the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to thrive and flourish into adulthood.

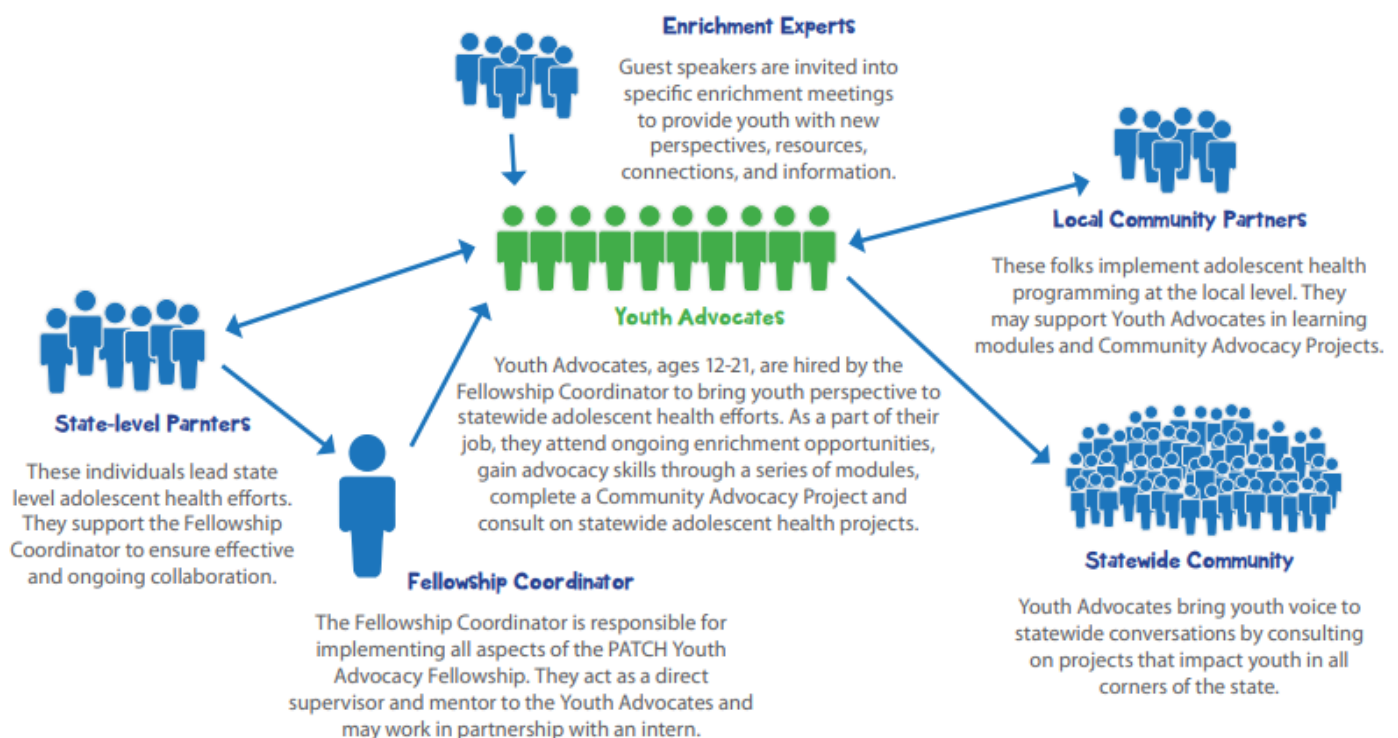
Development: In 2016, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services released a Request for Application to coordinate a statewide Youth Leadership Council with the intent of ensuring its program policies, goals, and decisions about youth, included youth. The Youth Leadership Council was to include representation of youth receiving state-based programs and services, provide space beyond program delivery for positive youth development, and capitalize on components of youth-adult partnerships to drive quality improvement of statewide programs and services. The Providers and Teens Communicating for Health (PATCH®) Program (based in Wisconsin) received the funds to capitalize on the success of its existing youth engagement efforts which served as a foundation in developing the PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship. The first cohort of PATCH Youth Advocates convened in September of 2016, and the program has been evolving and improving through each subsequent program year. PATCH now serves as a key partner in helping the state better address adolescent health outcomes and public health goals via authentic youth engagement.

Core Components and Activities

Table 1. Practice Activities and Core Components

Core Component	Activities	Operational Details
Recruitment & Hiring	Recruit and hire well-rounded, passionate, dedicated, diverse, and representative team of youth advocates	Completed on an annual basis through a competitive hiring process (i.e., completing an application and interview); team consists of approximately 15 youth who have committed to a 9-month contract
Onboarding & Training	Ensure youth receive the necessary knowledge and skills to do their job well	A 3-day training designed for team bonding and laying the foundation for a successful youth-adult partnership
Positive Youth-Adult Partnerships	Find a critical balance between professional and personal relationships with each engaged young person	A supportive and dynamic relationship with an adult is known to be a protective factor for youth AND this personal connection is what makes the work so powerful
Enrichment Meetings	Additional education and training from local experts about topics important to their jobs and daily lives, as well as check-ins on particular job responsibilities	Group meetings occur via videoconferencing twice a month for two hours at a time
Learning Modules	Help Youth Advocates further their advocacy skills	Each module takes 1-2 hours to complete and are assigned at various points throughout the Fellowship; to be completed independently outside of group programming
Community Advocacy Projects	Create and empower change makers	Each Youth Advocate develops a robust advocacy plan around an issue of choice and practices taking steps towards creating change; this is the culminating experience of the Fellowship
Consulting Services	Bring authentic youth voice to the forefront of adolescent health conversations and efforts	Youth Advocates act as consultants on relevant projects, programs, campaigns, and efforts -- providing critical feedback and perspective

Wisconsin PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship Structure:



Health Equity

The PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship cultivates a space for youth from all walks of life to make their voices heard in the program, policies, and decisions impacting them and their generation. The Fellowship model is intentionally designed to bring diverse youth voices from across the state together regardless of age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic location, family life, religion, ability, gender, and sexual identity. The representation and blending of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives enhances PATCH's relevance and innovation in addressing health equity. In Wisconsin, we place an emphasis on hiring and engaging those that experience the highest health disparities including youth of color, LGBTQ+ youth, youth with special health care needs, and youth from rural areas. The training and activities in the Fellowship also provide Youth Advocates with the knowledge and support to understand health equity and its impacts on populations. Young people have the ability to be incredible advocates for the health of their generation if given the space and tools to do so.

Evidence of Effectiveness

The Wisconsin PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship has kept youth actively engaged over the course of 9 months and has shown to have positive, self-reported impacts on participant knowledge, confidence, and skills. Unlike many after-school programs, this model is not designed to improve academic success. Instead, programming efforts focus on improving life skills (e.g., communication and leadership) and developing positive core values (e.g., responsibility and equality).

- *“When I was working for PATCH I was pushed out of my comfort zone to try new things, to advocate for myself and the things I believe in. I am such an introvert, but I learned that my opinions matter and I should work hard to put my opinions out there.”*
- *“I really liked the idea of having a fellowship that empowers young people. I liked how it was virtual so it was accessible and convenient.”*
- *“I feel like PATCH sparked a fire within me. I feel motivated and inspired to make lasting change in my life. I am so thankful for this past year and I am eager to bring in my knowledge from PATCH with me to college and beyond.”*

To date, those who have consulted with PATCH Youth Advocates have found the experience “very helpful” (100% respondents). By providing authentic insights and perspectives, PATCH Youth Advocates are ensuring adolescent health improvement efforts truly meet the needs of Wisconsin youth, yielding more adolescent-friendly and effective programs, services and supports.

- *“Working with PATCH has given the Maternal and Child Health Program a greater understanding the needs of Wisconsinites. They consistently give thoughtful, insightful feedback and input to all of our questions which has shaped the goals of our programming.”*
- *“Working with the Youth Advocates was extremely valuable. It allowed us to get constructive feedback from our intended audience which greatly improved our final deliverable.”*
- *“The teens provided a lot of great feedback and input that led to some significant changes in the documents we were working to create...[they] provided many helpful insights that my colleagues aren't able to since youth were the intended audience.”*

The PATCH Program is proud to share PATCH's evidence, impact, and lessons learned through various mediums. For impact reports, publications, and presentations visit www.patchprogram.org.

Section II: Practice Implementation

Lessons Learned

Since the first Youth Advocacy Fellowship cohort convened in 2016, numerous adaptations have been implemented with quality improvement efforts as a central goal. Initially, the youth advocates' curriculum focused more intentionally on identifying issues for local advocacy and partnering with community organizations to create change. Today, in addition to offering youth the opportunity to develop their own local or state-level advocacy project, they are also more highly engaged in state-level consulting and advocacy efforts, providing group consultations and impacting state-level work. Additionally, we have tried, tested, and changed implementation processes over the years – all in hopes of better supporting young people. A few realizations over the years:

- Youth have continued to be engaged even when virtual and appreciate the support of another trusted adult regularly engaging in their life.
- Youth are empowered to start making change outside of the Fellowship in their own school, neighborhood, and community. Youth begin to notice injustices or needs in their community and bring the issue to the Fellowship for further examination or to seek additional resources of support.
- With spread of 12–21-year-olds, older youth mentor and learn from younger youth; younger youth see options for their future they may not otherwise be exposed to. This broad age-range brings various perspectives and makes exploration of adolescent health topics more robust.
- Regardless of where people live, youth are impacted by the same issues - translating across all communities. For example, during interviews with over 25 youth for the 2020-2021 Fellowship Cohort, every single one, regardless of community (urban, rural, etc.), mentioned mental health as the top concern for their peer groups. All youth were interested in gaining skills to ensure they knew how to connect friends to effective mental health resources specifically during a pandemic. In past years, similar themes have been identified as cross-cutting, such as LGBTQ+ well-being and comprehensive sexuality education.

Next Steps

PATCH Staff are continuously learning and striving to apply the most advanced information and research to be a revolutionary leader in public health. We value integrity and actively assess program's alignment with evidence, guidelines, standards, and emerging trends. We recognize, value, and celebrate the fact that youth change and thus, our programming and efforts need to adapt, too. We strive to keep the program relevant in an ever-changing society and aim to meet the growing demands of today's youth. PATCH uses a variation of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle to quality improvement and is informed by our ongoing collection of process, outcome, and impact data. PATCH Staff annually reviews and revises (as deemed necessary) the program's strategic plan, programming, and materials.

Moving forward, we hope to add to the published evidence base with support from experts in the field. More importantly, we look forward to encouraging, supporting, and collaborating with others who are interested in such efforts. Together for adolescent health!

Internal Capacity

At a minimum, the PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship requires a Coordinator and a Youth Advocate Team. An intern (paid or unpaid) may provide programmatic support:

- **Fellowship Coordinator:** A Coordinator is required to implement the Fellowship and may range from 0.5 – 1 FTE depending on program size and capacity. FTE percentage may fluctuate based on program cycle. The Coordinator must work well with various populations to be successful due to the diversity in roles and responsibilities (i.e., building authentic relationships with teens, maintaining meaningful connections with community stakeholders, and working with a variety of state partners).
- **Youth Advocate Team:** A team of 15 youth (recommended ages 12-21) is hired and trained to be leaders and activists. Each Youth Advocate is expected to fulfill a commitment to one program year (e.g., nine-months).

Stakeholder Empowerment & Collaboration

PATCH intentionally convenes non-traditional partners (i.e., public health, care delivery, education, youth programming, academia, advocacy, businesses, and more!) for a common purpose - exponentially influencing the program's growth.

The Fellowship was created to support Wisconsin's Adolescent Health Program and its response to a comprehensive system for adolescent health. Thus, PATCH works closely with various Wisconsin State Departments (e.g., Maternal and Child Health, Adolescent Health, and Injury Prevention), as well as many partners throughout the state working in adolescent health (e.g., sexual health, mental health, Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse treatment programs, violence, and social justice) and/or interacting with youth (e.g., education, health care, social services, local community-based organizations, parents, families, and others). Yet, what brings PATCH staff the most joy is working alongside youth – listening to their stories, valuing their experiences, and empowering them to be advocates for themselves and their peers.

Replication

Although this practice has not yet been replicated outside of Wisconsin, PATCH is not new to program replication. We are in the process of finalizing a program replication package for the Fellowship based on our existing Core PATCH Package – a replicable, youth-driven intervention to improve the way adolescents receive, experience, and utilize health care. The replication package will support partners throughout all phases of planning, implementation, and sustainability.

Pilot of Modified Model: 8-Week Summer PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship

In the summer of 2018, we implemented an adapted 8-week PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship. The intent was to: utilize available funding to achieve exponential statewide reach, engaging more youth than ever before; explore youth interest in a paid summer program experience; and determine impact of a condensed 8-week curriculum. Each of Wisconsin's five public health regions had a PATCH Fellowship Regional Coordinator and a Youth Advocate team. PATCH Program Staff hired and trained the Regional Coordinators. Training took place over a 3-day in-person training retreat. This training allowed Regional Coordinators to formally meet PATCH staff, gain a comprehensive understanding of the PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship model, and help the PATCH Staff and Regional Coordinators develop a foundation for effective coaching and mentorship. Each Regional Coordinator received a detailed implementation manual. PATCH staff held individual, weekly check-ins with each Regional Coordinator, as well as weekly group calls to share successes and lessons learned. Across all regions, forty-seven youth were employed to be drivers of change in their communities. Summer PATCH Youth Advocates completed seven independent learning modules – one per week after their initial training. As in the full 9-month model, the modules built upon one another to aid in the development of a Community Advocacy Project. These projects were disseminated via poster presentations at a statewide, professional development conference. Over 40 youth traveled via buses and carpools organized by Regional Coordinators to the conference. The PATCH poster session was noted in evaluations as a highlight of the conference. The youth in the summer Fellowship did not engage in consulting, as the 8-week curriculum was high-paced and left little room for additional work outside of the enrichment meetings, modules, and Community Advocacy Project development. We were able to engage more youth at one time but the work nor the relationships were as meaningful - a key lesson learned regarding the condensed curricula.

Practice Timeline

Practice Timeline				
Phase	Description of Activity	Activity Timeframe	# of hours needed to complete activity	Person(s) Responsible
Exploration and Assessment	<i>Determine contextual fit and feasibility factors:</i> PATCH Staff is happy to discuss its history, development, theory, and model with interested parties. For those looking to replicate, these initial conversations also help determine fit, feasibility, readiness, capacity, and funding.	Capacity Building	Varied	Replication Partner / Host Organization Leadership; Support provided by PATCH Program Staff
Planning/ Pre-implementation	<i>Secure needed resources; Develop a solid organizational and staffing structure; Hire and train Fellowship Coordinator; Address emergent challenges:</i> Interested parties sign a memorandum of agreement to initiate a transparent, collaborative, and personal mentorship with PATCH Program staff. A 12-hour Fellowship Coordinator Training (in-person or virtual) helps lay the foundation for successful implementation (i.e., ensure a comprehensive understanding of the Fellowship model) and for effective coaching and mentorship between the PATCH Coach and locally employed Fellowship Coordinator.	Capacity Building	Varied	Replication Partner / Host Organization Leadership; Support provided by PATCH Program Staff
Implementation	<i>Plan, implement & evaluate programming with support and guidance from a PATCH Coach:</i> Determine program goals and capacity and create a detailed timeline for corresponding efforts. PATCH Coaches are able to recommend program year timeline based on lessons learned and previous success. This includes: recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and training of Youth Advocates; coordinating Enrichment Meetings; implementing learning modules; organizing consulting opportunities; supporting and celebrating Youth Advocate's Community Advocacy Projects.	Ongoing	0.5 – 1.0 FTE Employee	Replication Partner / Host Organization's Fellowship Coordinator; Support provided by PATCH Program Staff
Sustainability	<i>Monitor, learn from, and improve upon ongoing implementation:</i> PATCH is committed to creating a community of practice for those implementing the Fellowship model - to shares successes, challenges, best practices, lessons learned, additional resources, and programming updates.	Ongoing	Varied	Replication Partner / Host Organization's Fellowship Coordinator; Support provided by PATCH Program Staff

Practice Cost

The average cost to launch and implement the PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship is approximately \$8,000. This includes the licensing fee, initial implementation materials, training, and coaching for one year. Additional resources are needed to cover staff salaries and youth stipends, office and meeting space, supplies, transportation, lodging, meals, and materials. In sequential years, the program start-up costs no longer apply and the cost to maintain a PATCH Fellowship varies based on program reach and capacity. PATCH has experience with utilizing different approaches to cover program costs, including grants, sponsorships, partnerships, and in-kind space and/or materials.

Activity/Item	Brief Description	Quantity	Total
Program Start-Up Costs			
Replication Package	Includes licensing fee, one (1) Implementation Manual, and 12-hour in-person or virtual Fellowship Coordinator Training	1	\$5,000 (one-time fee)
Travel & Lodging for Training	Covers travel, lodging and meals for a PATCH Coach to lead a 12-hour Fellowship Coordinator Training (in-person only)	1 (N/A for virtual)	\$500 - \$1,500 (est. range)
Additional Programmatic Components			
Implementation Manuals	Required for all Fellowship Coordinator Training participants	1 per additional Training attendee	\$500
PATCH Coaching	Level of coaching is agreed upon in MOU	1	\$1,000 - \$3,000 (est. range)
Estimated Costs to Implement Program (Cost varies based on size and capacity)			
Staff Salary and Benefits	A Fellowship Coordinator is required for each Fellowship and may range from 0.5 – 1 FTE; FTE portion may shift based on program cycle	1	Varies based on Site
Youth Advocate Stipends	Youth Advocates must be paid a minimum of \$12/hr. based on cost of living; approximately \$72/month per advocate	Avg. 15 Youth Advocates	\$9,720 (est. for 15-member team)
Enrichment Speaker Stipends	Enrichment speakers are key to Youth Advocates' learning, growth, and connections; 5-10 guest speakers at \$100-\$200 per session	5-10 Guest Speakers	\$1,000 (est.)
Youth Advocate T-Shirts	Official PATCH Youth Advocate T-shirts are provided to all PATCH Youth Advocates to be worn during work-related events.	Avg. 15 Youth Advocates	\$300 (est.)
Operational Funds	Funds for day-to-day implementation such as Youth Advocate Training, ongoing technology support, and mailings (e.g., paychecks and materials).	1	\$7,000 - \$9,000 (est. range)
Total Amount:			Varied; Avg. Start-Up Cost = \$8,000 <i>See description above.</i>

Resources Provided

N/A.

Appendix

N/A.

Practice Contact Information

For more information about this practice, please contact:

PATCH Program Staff at staff@patchprogram.org or
visit www.patchprogram.org