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## MCH Innovations Database Practice Summary & Implementation Guidance

# Adolescent & Teen Health

The Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County's Adolescent & Teen Health Program is a unique and innovative collaboration between a university, youth clinic, community-based organization, and school district aimed at improving teen access to sexual health services and community resources. Key components of the program include the design and launch of an online resource directory, establishment of formal partnerships and trainings with youth-serving organizations, youth engagement through the formation of a Youth Advisory Board, and the development and implementation of a resource navigation and referral strategy.



## Location

Tampa, Florida



## Topic Area

Service  
Coordination/Integration



## Setting

Community



## Population Focus

Adolescent Health



## NPM

N/A



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# Section 1: Practice Summary

## PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

The Adolescent & Teen Health Program is a unique and innovative collaboration between a university (University of South Florida), clinic (Ybor Youth Clinic), community-based organization (Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County), and school district (Hillsborough County Public Schools) that was developed in response to a community need to address the rising rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among youth in Hillsborough County, FL, and to fill gaps in existing youth-friendly resources available.

The result was the development of the community's first online resource directory and referral database for teens and young adults ([www.TeenConnectTampaBay.org](http://www.TeenConnectTampaBay.org)). The database catalogues sexual health services and community resources available in Hillsborough County and provides comprehensive sexual health education. The website features a searchable directory with sexual health providers that are committed to participating in trainings to increase their capacity to meet the needs of teens. In addition, a community navigator was hired to support youth in connecting with sexual health services and additional resources identified as their highest needs, including mental health services, housing, food assistance, employment, and health insurance.

As the community's only youth-centered health clinic specifically designed to serve youth 13-24, and hub for innovative adolescent medicine research, the USF Health Ybor Youth Clinic (YYC) was well positioned as the pilot site for the navigator portion of the program. The clinic's service delivery model of offering free walk-in HIV and STI testing results in large numbers of youth seeking out the clinic and presents a unique opportunity to provide additional risk reduction services to a population that might not otherwise seek them. While the clinic is well equipped to manage STI treatment and provide case management support to HIV positive patients, the implementation of the navigator to support the broader social needs of its HIV negative patient population helped to expand the clinic's scope of services with the ultimate goal of providing a replicable model of youth-friendly care in the Tampa Bay region.

The program has been guided by the Adolescent Health Advisory Board, a multi-sector network of healthcare providers, social service professionals and community members that was brought together in 2017 by the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County. The committee reviewed teen pregnancy, birth, and STI rates to identify priority areas for improving teen access to sexual health services and removing barriers to care. In addition, a secret shopper model was used to assess gaps in existing resources among sexual health providers. The board used this data to identify three focus areas to address unmet needs that served as the foundation for the program, which include 1) creating a community resource hub, 2) providing education, and 3) developing trainings to help enhance the delivery of youth-centered care.



The Project Connect Health Systems Intervention, an evidence-based and scalable intervention, provided a step-by-step process for developing and implementing the countywide referral system. This included guidance on identifying and assessing existing providers, key considerations for trainings, and criteria to include in the referral database. Developing a Referral System for Sexual Health Services, an implementation toolkit that builds upon Project Connect, provided a framework for implementing the referral system to link youth to sexual health services and community resources.

Numerous resources were used from The Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI) to guide different components of the practice. AHI's Spark Trainings were adapted to develop Florida-specific trainings for providers and customized for local youth-serving professionals and parents. AHI's Youth-led Health Center Assessment tool was used by local teens to assess youth-friendliness of existing providers to identify gaps in existing resources and inform capacity-building areas for trainings. In addition, the YYC participated in AHI's Adolescent-Centered Environment Assessment Process (ACE-AP), an 18-month quality improvement process and self-assessment of the clinic's environment, policies and practices related to youth-friendly services that is being used to establish a model of youth-friendly care for our community.

In addition, the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) framework was used to test, refine and evaluate the patient navigation and referral strategy at the YYC. This included testing changes among a small group of patients and quickly applying what was learned before implementation among the full patient population. This helped to inform the best approach for integrating the resource navigator into the clinic workflow, the development of the opt-in referral process, and most effective ways of linking youth to resources.

## CORE COMPONENTS & PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

The goal of the Adolescent & Teen Health Program is to improve awareness of and access to youth-friendly sexual health services and community resources in Hillsborough County. We did this by developing a countywide, online resource directory and referral database to link teens and young adults to youth-friendly providers and resources, and embedding an adolescent health navigator into a local youth clinic. The core components of this program included the design and launch of the online resource directory (Teen Connect), establishment of formal partnerships and trainings with youth-serving organizations, youth engagement through the formation of a Youth Advisory Board, and the development and implementation of a resource navigation and referral strategy.



## Core Components & Practice Activities

Core Component	Activities	Operational Details
Online Resource Directory	Design and promote a youth-centered website that provides education and a directory of resources	Identify, test, and launch a user-friendly web platform and searchable directory tool to support youth in easily locating available resources.
Partnerships and Trainings	Establish MOUs with youth-serving organizations and conduct trainings	Formalize referral relationships through establishment of MOUs with partners and provide trainings to increase their capacity to meet the needs of teens.
Youth Engagement	Surveys, focus groups, listening sessions, youth-led health center assessments, formation of a Youth Advisory Board, monthly meetings, youth-led marketing campaign	Continuously engage youth at all stages to provide feedback on website design, content, and marketing, and offer ongoing input on youth service experiences and barriers to care.
Resource Navigation	Referrals and linkages to youth-friendly sexual health services and community resources	Identify youth resource needs through establishing an opt-in process, provide personalized navigation services via website and clinic setting, and initiate usage of referral management system to track referrals and linkages to care.
Youth-Friendly Clinic Model	Integration of resource navigator into youth clinic and optimization of youth-friendly environment and practices	Identify pilot site for implementing patient navigation and referral strategy, utilize youth feedback to optimize youth-friendliness, conduct QI initiative to develop best practices and lessons learned.



## HEALTH EQUITY

Navigation services are provided at no cost and formal partnerships were established with a diverse network of youth-serving organizations to be able to link youth with inclusive and equitable resources to support their social, emotional, and physical health needs. The pilot site for the program (YYC) is designed to provide a safe, compassionate, accessible, and non-judgmental environment that welcomes all youth regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Services are offered at low or no cost, and are specialized for diverse populations at highest risk for HIV, STIs, and unplanned pregnancies, including LGBTQ youth, young men who have sex with men, minorities, and youth who lack the support of parents or caregivers.

As a storefront clinic in Ybor City, the YYC was built to serve the needs of youth impacted by health inequities and systemic oppression. Through the Adolescent & Teen Health Program, patients are able to select community resources to be connected with, which is tracked monthly and continuously informs the clinic's navigation and referral strategy to ensure that partnerships and systems are in place to respond to patients' complex and growing needs, and offers support for overcoming any barriers.

## EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

A core component of the evaluation plan is gathering youth feedback to continuously assess experiences with and knowledge of adolescent health services and community resources. Feedback is collected in the form of listening sessions, focus groups, and surveys among teen participants within our Youth Advisory Board, as well as through patient satisfaction surveys disseminated to patients at the Ybor Youth Clinic. The clinic has also recently implemented a dot survey within the waiting room to measure a variety of youth attitudes regarding mental health and accessing mental health services. Patients respond to questions displayed on posters in a private corner of the waiting room, using colorful dot stickers to indicate their responses.

Trainings are being evaluated through pre-post surveys to identify increases in knowledge among parents for how to be "askable adults", and how well-informed healthcare providers and youth-serving professionals are about Florida's minor consent laws, policies and best practices, and how to deliver youth-centered care.

Process evaluation is being used to evaluate to what extent are interventions increasing linkages to care and referrals and to what extent are interventions reaching the target population. Data is being collected through an online referral management platform (Unite Us), patient encounter data, Google analytics data on the Teen Connect website, and Teen Connect Instagram analytics data.

Short-term outcomes being measured include:

- Adolescent Health Advisory Board includes entities across diverse sectors and stakeholder groups (including organizations committed to reducing health inequities and systemic oppression)
- Youth are screened for resource needs and receive personalized support and resources



- Youth have access to comprehensive sexual health education and youth-friendly services
- Partners and collaborators have increased capacity to address youth sexual health needs
- Providers are well informed about FL's minor consent laws, policies & best practices and how to deliver youth-centered care

Intermediate outcomes that will be measured include:

- Youth's ability to access sexual health services and community resources easily
- Healthy sexual behaviors become social norms
- Parents have increased knowledge and tools for how to be "askable adults" to initiate ongoing conversations about sexual health with their teens

Long-term outcomes that will be measured include changes in the percentage of high school students reporting STI testing and HIV testing in the past year using the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Sexual health outcomes will be measured using data from Florida Charts to assess changes in the county's STI, HIV and teen birth rates. Utilization of sexual health services will be measured using partner agencies' medical records data to assess increases in the percentage of teens and young adults enrolled in Title X and the percentage of teens and young adults who completed a sexual health care visit. When available, data will be stratified by race and ethnicity, as well as sexual orientation to be able to measure and reduce health inequities and systemic oppression.

Some other initial success and positive indicators include:

- The Ybor Youth Clinic received the 2021 Excellence in Adolescent Health Award from AHI as a result of demonstrating the core values of Collaboration, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Expertise, Innovation, Quality, and Responsiveness.
- The Ybor Youth Clinic is soon to be certified as an Adolescent-Centered Environment, demonstrating success in advancing the clinic's environment, policies and practices related to youth-friendly services.
- A total of 785 resource referrals were provided to patients at the Ybor Youth Clinic since integration of the Adolescent Health Navigator in July 2019.
- 416 patients at the Ybor Youth Clinic received personalized navigation services based on their individual needs.
- As of Sept. 30, 2021, the Teen Connect website has engaged 9,303 users since launching in Aug. 2019. There was an increase of 5,884 users from year 1 to year 2.
- Targeted Instagram advertising as part of the Youth Advisory Board's first youth-led marketing campaign reached 8,244 teens and young adults ages 13-24 in a 1-month period with information about the importance of STI testing and how to locate an STI testing site near them. The campaign included youth creation of a video, "A Teen's Guide to Getting Tested", that showcases the step-by-step process of getting tested from a teen's perspective, and educates teens about how to utilize the Teen Connect directory to find youth-friendly services.
- 23 formal partnerships were established through MOUs with youth-serving organizations in the Tampa Bay area that provide linkages to a wide range of health and social services including sexual health, mental health, housing, food assistance, health insurance, teen parent support, education, and employment/career planning.
- 220 individuals across 7 organizations/groups participated in Adolescent Health "Spark" trainings. Surveys show that the majority of parent participants reported a considerable



amount of knowledge gained post-training in areas including ability to empower adolescents and teens by sharing local resources, ability to be an askable adult by helping young people feel comfortable asking them for support, and feeling more comfortable talking to their child or teen about sexual health. The majority of healthcare providers/youth-serving professionals that participated reported a considerable amount of knowledge gained in areas including ability to use a strengths-based approach when talking to teens about sexual health, ability to communicate consent and confidentiality rights with adolescents they serve, and ability to empower adolescents and teens by sharing local resources.

## Section 2: Implementation Guidance

### COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS

The Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County engages partners through its Adolescent Health Advisory Board and the Teen Connect Youth Advisory Board. The Adolescent Health Advisory Board is a multi-sector network of healthcare providers, social service professionals and community members that meet quarterly to provide advisory support and collaborative input on program activities. Currently the board is comprised of 26 individuals representing 20 different organizations across key areas including sexual health/healthcare, public health, maternal and child health, education, mental health, and youth development. Membership has expanded to include additional representation from parents and teens. Invitations to join the board are extended by current members who help to identify additional stakeholders and individuals that have a vested interest in adolescent health and are critical to advancing program initiatives.

The Teen Connect Youth Advisory Board is made up of high school students across the district that meet monthly to work on creative projects focused on developing and launching a youth-led sexual health marketing campaign, as well as providing feedback on program activities. Membership recruitment occurs on an ongoing basis through an open application process where students can submit an online interest form throughout the school year. Outreach is conducted via social media, emails to school staff, presentations to community groups, and personalized invitations from existing members to friends and peers.

To support continued engagement, surveys are conducted periodically to gather feedback from both groups on member satisfaction, recommendations for changes or improvements to the format and content of meetings, and to gather insights on program initiatives and priorities.





## Practice Collaborators and Partners

Partner/Collaborator	How are they involved in decision-making throughout practice processes?	Does this stakeholder have lived experience/come from a community impacted by the practice?
Youth (teens and young adults 13-24)	Youth are involved through participation in Youth Advisory Boards that meets monthly to provide input on social media and marketing strategies, and offer feedback on service experiences and barriers that is used to inform program design and quality improvement.	Yes, this age group is the priority audience as they experience disproportionately high rates of STIs.
Sexual health providers and youth-serving professionals	Sexual health providers and youth-serving professionals are part of the Adolescent Health Advisory Board that meets quarterly to review program outcomes and provides recommendations at all stages including practice development, implementation, quality improvement, and evaluation.	Yes, they are key to the development and implementation of the practice as they provide direct services to the priority audience.
Parents of teens	Parents of teens participate in the Adolescent Health Advisory Board to provide feedback at all stages, and are surveyed following trainings to inform program design.	Yes, as parents have the greatest influence on their adolescents' decisions about sex and can impact their access to services.



## REPLICATION

This practice has not been replicated in any other locations.

## INTERNAL CAPACITY

Key program staff at the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County included the Director of Operations, MPH (0.05 FTE) who initially formed and facilitated the Adolescent Health Advisory Board, and oversees the program and staff. This person is responsible for policy development, program management, grant writing, contractual requirements, QA/QI efforts and financial and strategic planning for the agency, with over 17 years of experience. The Adolescent Health Resource Coordinator, MPH (1.0 FTE) was hired in the early stages of program development and provides support to the Adolescent Health Advisory Board and Teen Connect Youth Advisory Board, manages the online resource directory, conducts trainings, and serves as a patient navigator to support referrals and linkages to care at the youth clinic. This person brings more than 5 years of experience with certifications in social marketing and public health. The Community Liaison-Marketing (0.10 FTE) brings 20 years of experience with the agency, providing in-house graphic design and website development services, including supporting the design of the program’s marketing materials, campaigns, and online resource directory. More recently, a Master of Public Health Student Intern (0.25 FTE) was hired to support facilitation of the Teen Connect Youth Advisory Board and youth-led marketing campaign. As a “near peer”, this person has been able to strengthen youth engagement and the development of youth-friendly social media content.

Partnerships with the USF Health Ybor Youth Clinic as well as Hillsborough County Public Schools were also critical to the program’s success. This includes support from the clinic’s Executive Director, MD and Medical Director, MD, MPH, and the school district’s Coordinator of Comprehensive Health Education, MPH, CHES, CPH. Monthly meetings are held with representatives from each entity to facilitate continued collaboration and review of the online resource directory and strategies to improve access to sexual health services for students.

## PRACTICE TIMELINE

The following table offers a recommended timeline for developing the core components of the Adolescent & Teen Health Program. Responsible parties include the Adolescent & Teen Health Program team at the Healthy Start Coalition (HSC), Adolescent Health Advisory Board (AHAB), Teen Connect Youth Advisory Board (TCYAB), USF Health Ybor Youth Clinic (YYC), and Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS).



## Phase: Planning/Pre-Implementation

Activity Description	Time Needed	Responsible Party
Quarterly meetings with AHAB to review teen pregnancy, birth, and STI rates to identify priority areas for improving teen access to sexual health services and removing barriers to care	1 year; ongoing	HSC, AHAB
Application of secret shopper model to identify gaps in existing services	1 year; ongoing	HSC
Recruit, hire, and train Adolescent Health Resource Coordinator/ Navigator	3 months	HSC, YYC
Establish MOUs with sexual health providers and youth-serving organizations	Ongoing	HSC
Conduct youth-led health center assessments	2 months; Ongoing	HSC, TCYAB
Gather youth feedback to refine online resource directory website design and content	Ongoing	HSC, TCYAB



## Phase: Implementation

Activity Description	Time Needed	Responsible Party
Deliver adolescent health provider trainings	Ongoing	HSC
Integrate Adolescent Health Navigator into clinic workflow; implement referral services	3 months	HSC, YYC
Launch online resource directory; promote to community	1 month; ongoing	HSC, HCPS, YYC
Recruit high school students to join Youth Advisory Board	2 months; ongoing	HSC, HCPS

## Phase: Sustainability

Activity Description	Time Needed	Responsible Party
Conduct QI assessment of clinic environment, policies and practices related to youth-friendly services	18 months; ongoing	HSC, YYC
Conduct surveys among AHAB and TCYAB to assess member satisfaction, opportunities for diversification/expansion, and feedback on next steps	Ongoing	HSC, AHAB, TCYAB



Collaborate to review key metrics (online resource directory and social media analytics, referrals, patients served) and refine strategies

Ongoing (monthly)

HSC, YYC, HCPS, AHAB

## PRACTICE COST

For more information on this practice startup costs and budgets, please contact Danielle Lewald directly at [dlewald@hstart.org](mailto:dlewald@hstart.org).

## LESSONS LEARNED

It's important to think outside the box and address the issue from all angles and use multiple strategies.

The STI/HIV epidemic and teen pregnancy are significant issues with many structural obstacles. Connecting young people with services, and ensuring those services are adolescent-friendly and accessible involves making structural changes at every level, including the school, community agencies, and healthcare providers. It's essential to engage all stakeholders. Invite people to the table that you normally wouldn't engage. When encountering obstacles, it will be easier when everyone is working together to overcome them.

Youth input and ownership is vital to all aspects of this work. Finding ways to authentically engage them at all stages is critical for being able to design and implement interventions that can effectively meet their needs. We learned this quickly when we were in the early stages of our resource directory development and considered creating an app, thinking that would be most appealing to youth. However, when conducting a focus group with teens in our community, we learned that they preferred a mobile-friendly website and not an app that they had to download that would take up space on their phone.

Don't recreate the wheel. There is a multitude of organizations with existing resources that are willing to share materials and collaborate. Leverage existing best practices, evidence-based programs, and toolkits to guide your work. We have greatly benefited from utilizing and adapting resources from the Adolescent Health Initiative that are leaders in this area.

In this work it is inevitable to encounter pushback and people with fundamental differences of opinion that seem insurmountable. However, most of the time, if you are willing to listen, you can find common ground. We all are here to help young people live healthy lives. And if you are flexible, you can align your goals and find complementary routes to get to them. For instance, the school district



has constraints in what they are able to teach and the health services they are able to offer at school. That's why we developed a complementary website and resource directory that is managed by a community agency that doesn't have the same types of constraints, allowing for comprehensive and inclusive sexual health education and services to be accessible to students beyond the classroom.

Another challenge has been being able to track closed loop referrals among the many organizations we partner with across health and social services. We started by establishing a process for data sharing with each individual partner, however, this resulted in many different reports and a time-consuming process for reviewing outcomes and identifying gaps. We have been working to streamline this process through utilizing a free public access network and online referral management system (Unite Us), and encouraging more of our partners to sign-up and leverage the system to improve data-sharing among organizations across sectors.

Looking back, it would have been beneficial to have established a sustainability plan at the start of the program to outline needs for increased staffing and funding to further expand the program over time and increase our capacity to serve more teens and young adults in our community.

## NEXT STEPS

We continue to seek grant opportunities to be able to expand the program and explore the integration of adolescent health navigators in additional community settings, including schools and Federally Qualified Health Centers, to serve youth most at risk for adverse health outcomes.

We are working to identify and engage partners and individuals who are more likely to be systematically left out of projects through discussions with the Adolescent Health Advisory Board. Several potential partners and groups that continue to be hard to attract and engage are the faith-based community, and various youth who represent different geographic locations, racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations and gender identities, and sexual health service needs. We continue to work on expanding and diversifying the Adolescent Health Advisory Board network, as well as our Youth Advisory Board, to ensure diverse and inclusive representation.

## RESOURCES PROVIDED

- See *Program Resources and Toolkit* attached on Innovation Hub site for the following:
  - Adolescent Health Provider Information Assessment Tool
  - Adolescent Health Referral Form
  - Adolescent Health MOU Template
  - Youth-led Social Media Campaign Toolkit



## APPENDIX

- See *Program Resources and Toolkit* attached on Innovation Hub site for the following:
  - Teen Connect Tampa Bay Marketing Card
  - Teen Connect Tampa Bay Impact Report

