

Exploring Models for Youth Engagement in Community Health Planning: The Youth-led Community Health Learning Initiative

Andrew E. Springer, DrPH¹, Allison N. Marshall, MSSW, MPH, PhD¹, Randy Randolph, BA², Anna V. Wilkinson, PhD¹, Barri Rosenbluth, MSSW², Amanda Cortez, BS³, Meg Greene, MFA², Leigh Ann Ganzar, MPH, DrPH¹, Susan Millea, PhD⁴, Ashley Levulett, BA⁴, Miguel Delgado-Ochoa, BA³, and Norris Sebastian, MEd³

(1) Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health; (2) The SAFE Alliance–Expect Respect Program; (3) Del Valle Independent School District; and (4) Children’s Optimal Health

Corresponding author: Andrew E. Springer, DrPH. Email: Andrew.E.Springer@uth.tmc.edu

What Is the Purpose of This Study?

- The Youth-Led Community Health Learning Initiative (YLCHLI) was a 1-year pilot initiative aimed at identifying health needs and assets in partnership with youth leaders and two central Texas communities.
- With the overarching aim of co-learning around models for youth-led community health assessment (CHA) that can enhance community health planning and healthy youth development, we describe our approach and lessons learned in implementing the YLCHLI in two different settings: a high school-based setting and a community-based organization setting.

What Is the Problem?

- Community health assessment and improvement planning processes are challenged with developing health actions that reach across a large community, city or county and that incorporate locally informed issues and place-specific improvement strategies.
- Easy-to-disseminate models are needed to increase youth voice in community health planning processes.

What Are the Findings?

- Youth-informed findings based in photovoice, participatory mapping, data walks and other methods provided rich insights and context for understanding disparities in physical activity, healthy eating, health services, and mental health as well as locally informed recommendations for community health improvement.

Who Should Care Most?

- Community health assessment and improvement practitioners.
- Positive youth development practitioners and researchers and high school health science track faculty.

Recommendations for Action

- High school and community organization-based settings represent promising structures for fostering community partnerships and engaging youth in identifying community health needs and actionable opportunities for community health improvement planning.



- Future research on the creation of a network of youth-led CHA initiatives across communities as well as the benefits of youth-led CHA for youth participants holds potential to advance the field of community health planning as well as strategies for healthy adolescent development.