

Central Massachusetts Regional Public Health Alliance

Youth Health Action Committee



Peer Health Organizer Position Description

What is the Youth Health Action Committee?

The Youth Health Action Committee is a new initiative comprised of young people from the Central Massachusetts area interested in driving social change efforts to promote healthier communities. Members will act as Peer Health Organizers and represent their peers in the decision making processes of the Central Massachusetts Regional Health Alliance (CMRHA) and the Regional Response to Addiction Partnership (RRAP). Comprised of youth ages 15-18 from the towns of Grafton, Holden, Leicester, Millbury Shrewsbury, West Boylston, as well as the city of Worcester, the Youth Action Committee will serve the needs of the community and provide a space for education, dialogue, and action. A curriculum exploring health equity and health disparities will drive committee meetings and prepare committee members to implement a social norms campaign at the end of the academic year. Through a social-justice oriented lens, Peer Health Organizers will have the opportunity to grapple with the complex factors and forces that determine a community's health.

What health issues will the Youth Health Action Committee address?

According to the bi-annual Regional Youth Health Survey (RYHS), 27% of high school students reported that they drank in the last 30 days (2015/2016). Additionally, 20% of local high school students reported that they smoked marijuana in the past 30 days (2015/2016). The RYHS, which is administered to middle and high schoolers across four municipalities by the CMRPHA, provides data about what kind of behaviors youth engage in. Gathering this information allows both researchers and invested community members, like YHAC's peer organizers, to understand why these behaviors are happening and what can be done to change them.

What will Peer Health Organizers work on?

The principal long-term project will be the creation and implementation of a social norms campaign built *by* youth to change awareness, perceptions, and attitudes about substance use among their peers.

The Worcester Public Schools is not responsible for, or connected with, any aspect of this program and participation in this program is the sole decision and responsibility of the parent/guardian.

Opportunities

- Gain leadership experience
- Create positive social changes in home communities
- Cultivate a unique understanding of health equity and health disparities
- Learn more about careers in the public health field
- Earn a yearly stipend for consistent participation

Responsibilities

- Commit to the Council for at least 1 school year (October 2016 – June 2017)
- Attend 80% of committee meetings per a mutually decided upon attendance policy
- Attend at least 2 RRAP/WDPH events per each term
- Attend home meetings and presentations
- Speak publicly in meetings with CMRPHA, RRAP, general public, administrators, etc.
- Any additional responsibilities as they are agreed upon by the committee

For further information please contact Bryan Diehl by phone at (774)502-7027 or by email diehlb@worcesterma.gov.

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