



TAG in Action: Providers and Teens Communicating for Health (PATCH)

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health, Think, Act, GrowSM (TAG)**, the Office of Adolescent Health, in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

The Goal

The Wisconsin-based Providers and Teens Communicating for Health Program (PATCH), is an innovative, teen-delivered educational program that strives to improve the ability of health care providers and teens to communicate effectively about sensitive health topics—such as sexual health, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse, or safety—thereby improving the quality of care that the teens receive.

The Game Plan

PATCH offers two workshops taught by Teen Educators, one for providers, and another for teens. PATCH for Providers is an interactive and practical training in which healthcare providers are taught a model for asking teens questions about sensitive subjects such as alcohol use, self-esteem and sexuality. Providers are also given guidance on how to effectively handle patient confidentiality with teens, for example by developing an office policy on confidentiality and clearly stating exceptions to confidentiality.

The PATCH for Teens workshop focuses on the importance of open communication between teens and healthcare providers and provides tips and tools to facilitate communication. Teen Educators equip their peers with skills to navigate the healthcare system and advocate for health care visits that prioritize judgment-free care. They also teach teens skills to help them engage in meaningful and effective communication with healthcare providers.

The Wisconsin Medical Journal recently published research that demonstrated that participating providers and teens experienced significant improvements in knowledge, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions to seek and provide quality sexual health care. The PATCH program is planning to expand throughout Wisconsin and is working toward replication nationwide.

The Winning Plays

Amy Olejniczak, Director of the PATCH Program, explained the impact that PATCH has on those involved. “The power of PATCH comes from the Teen Educators. They become empowered to be advocates on health care issues. They learn to train adults, and not just any adults, but doctors and nurses. We see these skills [not only] getting the results we want in the workshops, but also affecting the rest of their lives. The Teen Educators become natural advocates for their peers and in our community. They have spoken out on other issues such as bullying. PATCH isn’t just improving health outcomes for the next generation, we’re also creating advocates for the next generation.”

Learn More

The Wisconsin Alliance for Women’s Health
<http://www.wipatch.org>

