



Building a Safety Net for Teen Mental Health

There is a significant need for improved mental health supports and services for teens – in schools, in communities, in crisis, and in health care. Change is needed to address the complexities in coordinating and accessing care across mental and physical health systems and the education system, not just in Pennsylvania but across the country.



Forming the PA Youth Advocacy Network

Inspired by national youth movements, the Jewish Healthcare Foundation (based in Pittsburgh) sought to engage young people in this urgent call to action. The aim of developing a statewide youth advocacy network is to connect a **diverse group of student leaders**, including teens with lived experience facing mental health challenges and their peers, to **develop advocacy skills**, understand implications of **policy and resource allocation**, and **advocate for change**. Since the initial advocacy summit in November 2018, youth have demonstrated they are a powerful force for change, leading advocacy and awareness building efforts in their own communities and joining together to advocate at the state level.

The Network brings together a diverse group of youth advocates and partner organizations, including Stand Together, The Second Floor at the Jewish Community Center of Pittsburgh, the Beaver County Youth Ambassadors Program, the Friendship Circle-Pittsburgh, UpStreet Pittsburgh, PA Care Partnership, Youth MOVE PA, The Mentoring Partnership, and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.



Identifying Youth Values

- Mental health is equally as important as physical health
- Positive mental health includes a sense of wellbeing, resiliency and ability to cope
- Students are people, not just grades. There's too much pressure to be 'perfect'
- We need to change the narrative around mental health and reduce stigma



The Youth Voice: A Call to Action

- Educate teachers and teens in mental health
- Create safe, supportive, and inclusive school communities
- Address disparities in school resources
- Promote suicide prevention and awareness
- Recognize mental health as part of *health*



Advocating for Change

- Election Day 2018: Youth Advocacy Summit
- Youth-led Session at Representative Dan Miller's Disability & Mental Health Summits
- Advocacy Day in Harrisburg, PA for National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day



Get Started by:

- Building your advocacy skills and connecting with your representatives using this [Advocacy Toolkit](#)
- Participating in monthly calls designed to share your advocacy work and learn from others
- Assisting us in creating future advocacy opportunities to share youth perspectives around the changes you would like to see



A program of

