

Investing in Teens to Impact Health: The Ohio 4-H Healthy Living Advocate Program

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Health is the 4th H of 4-H! This poster describes the rationale, implementation, and evaluation of the Ohio 4-H Healthy Living Advocate program.

Background

Healthy Living is one of 4-H's national mission mandates.

Need: Health-Related Issues & Youth

- Youth **do not meet guidelines** for healthy eating and physical activity.
- Teens report higher **stress levels** than adults.
- Middle school **suicide rate** is at an all-time high.

Concept: Youth Advocacy

- Youth advocacy is a potentially powerful tool:
 - to **influence changes** in environments and policies
 - a strategy that **benefits youth** skill development and well-being.

Best Practice: Teens As Leaders

- Studies of peer-delivered health interventions show that **teens can be effective leaders**.
- Health ambassador-type programs have helped 4-H to:
 - **Expand reach** to underserved audiences
 - **Create changes** for teens & program participants



Program Objectives

- To expand 4-H healthy living programs in Ohio
- To inspire teens to be involved in making health-related changes in their communities

Implementation: From Plans to Action



The plan teens created at the National Youth Summit for Healthy Living in February 2016 outlined a similar event for Ohio.



Teens participants are making action plans at the OHteens4Health Youth Health Summit held on November 12, 2016.



While attending the National Youth Summit for Healthy Living in 2016, teens from the Lodi Family Center made plans for summer activities.

“It has helped me actually become a lot healthier. It’s given me a lot more opportunities to be in front of people and actually talk to them about the choices they are making.”

Evaluation

Teens were surveyed about their experiences in the 2015-2016 4-H Healthy Living Advocate program. Twenty-four teens completed the *4-H Common Measures* survey with both fixed-response and open-ended questions.

Participants learned how to make healthy food and beverage choices (Table 1) and were engaged in their communities.

Table 1: Teens' Health-Related Practice Changes				
As a result of this Healthy Living program...	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I drink more water.	71%	29%	0%	0%
I drink less soda.	63%	37%	0%	0%
I eat less junk food.	50%	42%	8%	0%
I eat more fruits and vegetables.	50%	42%	4%	4%
I eat more whole grains.	38%	50%	12%	0%
I make healthy choices whenever I can.	33%	67%	0%	0%

Respondents' mean age was 16 years, 74% were female, and they were 79% White and 21% African American.

Improving Programming

Engaging Teens

- Skill building
- Meaningful roles
- Relationships with peers and adults

Leveraging Financial Support

- Obtained over \$100,000 in grant funding
- Provided support for curriculum, supplies, personnel, & travel

Developing Partnerships

- Internal
- External

“Now my family eats a lot less sugar.”

Successes, Challenges, & Lessons Learned

- The state-level partnership between 4-H and FCS is a foundation for the program's success.
- Consider ways to encourage county-level programming in healthy living.
- Develop more teaching kits for teens to use in their counties.
- Continue to search for funding sources to support programming efforts.

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www.ohio4h.org/helathyliving