
TIP SHEET

Promoting & Engaging Your YAC

PROMOTING YOUR YAC

You tell your family or friends of the great activities your YAC is doing, but no one has heard of them. Sound familiar? Then it's time to promote your Youth Advisory Committee.

- Create an online presence. Develop a website and/or social media accounts. Have your YAC members help you identify the most utilized social media platforms for your target audience. If you are unfamiliar with social media platforms and how to maximize engagement, here are a few resources.
 - ✦ [Sprout Social](#) – This resource features free guides and access to blogs on social media advertising and strategies.
 - ✦ [Engaging with Youth on Social Media](#) from the Adolescent Health Initiative at University of Michigan.
 - ✦ SAMHSA has two guides: [Social Media Advertising 101](#) and [Social Media Platforms Overview and Tips](#).
 - ✦ Use a social media management app such as Buffer Publish or Hootsuite to help you schedule, monitor, and get analytics across several social media platforms.
- Get your youth involved on social media to help build engagement and spread awareness. Have members spread prevention messages, share why they joined the YAC, and provide information on how others can join.
- Other social media ideas that maximize engagement can include: Creating a YouTube Channel or a TikTok account and having your YAC help develop videos that share prevention messages, creating Snapchat filters, or having youth member social media takeover days.
- Host an open house event for the YAC. Invite parents, school, staff, community members, elected officials, and the media. Youth can share information about youth substance use in the community and how they are addressing it. An open house can be conducted virtually if needed through Zoom or other online conferencing platforms.
- Create a case statement for your YAC and use impactful stories and infographics to showcase your goals and activities.
- Develop a Communications Plan for each school.
- Develop or continue relationships with law enforcement, community coalitions, youth-serving agencies, and the media.

IMPLEMENT PROCESS EVALUATION

Process evaluation is a tool for recording and documenting ideas, concerns, activities, administrative and management structures, and resources. Process evaluation can help you determine how closely the program was implemented as planned and how well it reached the target population. Develop an evaluation using SurveyMonkey or Google Forms for youth members to complete. Make sure to make refinements to the YAC based off the feedback that was received. Some questions could include:

- How satisfied were they with the activities, committees, etc.?
- What was your favorite thing about participating in YAC?
- What two activities/events would you change for next year?
- What could the adult advisors do better next year?
- What leadership role would you like to have?
- What additional activities would you like to do next year?
- How would you recruit new YAC members?
- Any additional questions that would help inform planning for the next year.

MEMBER RECOGNITION

Recognition of the group and individual efforts is an important part of the retention of the YAC members and sustainability of the program.

- The end of the year is typically when many school activities are winding down, and recognitions begin to take place. Remember to recognize all the great work your YAC members have done during the year. Host a recognition ceremony and invite school administration or other key community stakeholders. Host virtually if needed.
- Ongoing recognition throughout the year is important. This could mean shoutouts at meetings, handwritten notes or certificates, or incentive prizes such as gift cards or coupons from local businesses.
- Recognize outstanding YAC members on social media by posting a picture and providing some information about that person, such as their favorite part of YAC this year, their favorite activities outside of school, etc.

KEEP THEM ENGAGED

As the future remains uncertain, make sure to work with your youth to plan ideas that can be done in either a virtual setting or in-person. Some ideas could include:

- Engage your members with a mixture of questions about pop culture and drugs & alcohol with Kahoot games, TikTok, and other social media.
- Have some fun competitions such as poster contests, a scavenger hunt, and video contests.

- Conduct a social media challenge for your youth to participate in safe, fun, and healthy activities. Some suggestions include playing board games, walking their dog, doing yoga, making music, doing their makeup, and then sharing it with friends. They make their post and tag three friends to challenge them to create a post, and they challenge three more friends, and on it goes.
- Utilize your YAC students to analyze your IYS data and create a presentation to the school board or other local stakeholders.
- Take your prevention efforts out into the community if you can't be in the school. Have the YAC members create flyers for local restaurants to include with their deliveries, sidewalk chalk prevention messages in town, prevention messages on business marquees or yard signs, etc.
- Make sure to keep in touch with your YAC members over the summer! Send messages of encouragement through email, text, or social media. If possible, arrange for a time to have the group meet in-person or virtually to touch base and begin outlining ideas for activities for next year.
- Develop some fun and engaging recruitment tools and create a recruitment plan for the next school year.
- Develop resources such as tip sheets or on-line trainings or discussions for skill development. Skills to develop could include critical thinking, active listening, effective troubleshooting, decision making, communication, leadership, and time management.
- Become familiar with and take advantage of the great services or programs that other organizations in the state offer, such as the SRUSPS (State/Regional SUPS):
 - **Engaging Youth for Positive Change (EYPC).** Engaging Youth for Positive Change (EYPC) is a program that engages youth ages 13-18 to become involved in civic engagement and learn, participate in, and change a local health-related policy. EYPC has been successfully implemented by educators, club advisors, youth-group leaders, and others using policy to create healthy communities. By engaging youth directly in a collaborative community-based change effort, EYPC aims to give young people the skills, confidence, and experience they need to become effective advocates for positive social change. To learn more visit: eypc.cprd.illinois.edu
 - **Youth Prevention Resource Center (YPRC).** YPRC works directly with youth, teachers, advisors, parents, SROs, local law enforcement, driver's ed facilitators, coalitions, and other community members who have an important role in youth's lives. They apply a holistic approach in all they do, ensuring that youth voices are represented and respected. YPRC provides resources to be responsive to the needs of youth and support healthy decision-making, supporting both those who work with you and youth themselves. To learn more visit: prevention.org/youth-prevention-resource-center

- **Operation Snowball.** Operation Snowball is an alcohol and other drug use prevention program based in Springfield, Illinois focusing on leadership development to empower youth to lead drug-free lives. Operation Snowball is founded on the belief that youth and adults can make responsible decisions when provided with factual information and an opportunity to develop an understanding of one's self and motivations. Operation Snowball has trainings available throughout the year that YAC members and advisors can participate in. To learn more visit: operationsnowballinc.org
- **Cebrin Gooman Teen Institute.** The Cebrin Goodman Teen Institute (CGTI) is an award-winning program that offers opportunities for teens around the state to learn about leadership, healthy choices and working with others to create better communities. CGTI is a great opportunity for YACs to be trained in critical topics, including facilitation, communication, leadership, ATOD prevention, mental health, and more. For more information visit: cg-ti.org.
- **Illinois Human Performance Project.** The Illinois Human Performance Project provides free, downloadable resources, materials, and online learning courses at ilhpp.org. The focus is on four core science modules: Sleep, nutrition, mood and mindset, and chemical health, as well as leadership development. All these components work together to help individuals feel and perform at their best physically, mentally, socially, and academically.

UTILIZE YOUR PEERS

Reach out to your peers using the Peer Sharing and Questions discussion forum on [Groupsite](#) to share ideas or ask questions of other providers. In addition, you can use the [Provider Directory](#) to search for providers to reach out to.