

INTRODUCING THE YAC TEAM LEAD

Authors

In 2020, the Texas Youth Action Network (TYAN) partnered with the Youth Advocacy Council (YAC) at Healthy Futures of Texas to create a new staff position called a Team Lead. The Team Lead is a college-aged youth (and alum of the YAC) who works to bridge the gap between the adult staff and youth members. The Team Lead also functions as a representative for the YAC and has boosted staff capacity.

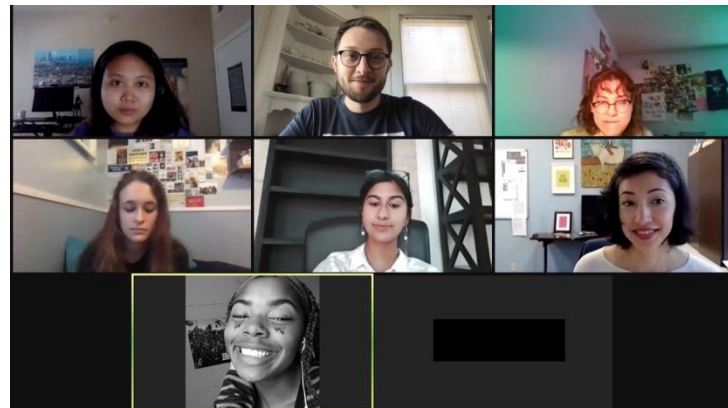
TYAN and Healthy Futures are working together to test the Team Lead model. We will share tips and tools for creating a Team Lead position with organizations at a later date.

Below are the thoughts and ideas from those involved after a year of the Team Lead project. Elizabeth and Anthony work for Healthy Futures as the Team Lead and Program Director, respectively. Emily is the Program Director for TYAN.

From your perspective, what has been the value of adding a Team Lead position to the YAC?

Elizabeth

The Team Lead position has increased rapport between both ends of the team. Having a Team Lead has led to the youth of this year's cohort to express feeling heard and appreciated throughout their participation. The Team Lead also worked to build an understanding of what is important to youth and how adult partners can help youth's goals.



On a personal note, taking this role has not only provided me with opportunities to become a working professional, but also the confidence to be a leader in healthcare. I have found a voice when communicating with adults, participating in decision-making, and engaging in the planning and execution of many campaigns.

Anthony

Adding the Team Lead position into our YAC model has improved both the quality of our positive youth development and the capacity of our team. A best practice in this work is to have a healthy ratio of young people to mentors. With one dedicated staff person, there was a limited ratio. Adding in our Team Lead has been a major boost there. This

means more time to reach out one-on-one with youth. There is also more time and ideas around how to improve our program model. Both things became even more critical in a pandemic setting, where both youth and staff were facing challenges. Every extra bit of help matters in a setting like this.



Emily

What we love about the team lead concept is that it can have a positive impact on many people. The YAC alum turned lead gets hands-on experience with organizing, communicating, and facilitating meetings in a professional setting. Organizational staff work with youth as a peer and can rely on their input in a way they may never have otherwise. The youth in the YAC can relate to the team lead and may even see themselves taking on the role someday. Each promotes positive youth development for adolescents.

From your perspective, in what ways might we continue to improve the Team Lead position?

Elizabeth

This position's points of improvements should focus on providing more support for the Team Lead's knowledge and role in the organization. An introduction to the sexual health movement would aid the Team Lead's confidence in their contributions. Establishing a clear set of responsibilities and expectations early in the year will support the function of this role.

Anthony

It's clear that our agency needs to continue to improve the structures in place to support our staff who are still in college. While we have the buy-in from every level of the agency's hierarchy, we are still learning exactly what role each person plays. I'm grateful for the energy our HR staff has put into making our onboarding processes more approachable. I can see the room we have for improvement throughout the following steps once the Team Lead is hired. Clearer expectations, stronger support, and direct instruction are critical. Those supervising the Team Lead must be willing to engage in day-to-day topics like email writing, partner communication, and timecards.

Emily

For the Team Lead position to be a success, we recommend continual reflection from the Team Lead and organizational staff. Which in turn takes open communication.

What advice do you have for other organizations considering adding a Team Lead?

Elizabeth

This position is especially rewarding!

Anthony

The energy it took to get this position up and running was, by leaps and bounds, worth it. Our program is stronger in how it engages youth, in our communication, and in reducing the effects of burnout and overwork. It does so by expanding capacity and building a larger table where we can hash out ideas and make plans.



Emily

Do not be afraid to experiment and tailor activities to what works for your group. It may take some trial and error.

Want more information? Reach out to:

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Apply for Healthy Futures YAC at www.hf-tx.org/yac

Find more information about TYAN at www.tyan.tamu.edu