



Teen Leadership Council

5-year Report to the
Community 2025





Giving teens knowledge, confidence and leadership skills

Dear community members,

As a pediatrician, I've spent my career working with teens who are full of potential, insight and passion. But adolescence isn't always easy. From rising mental health concerns to social pressures and inequitable access to resources, today's teens face many challenges. That's why programs like the Teen Leadership Council (TLC) matter.

At its core, the TLC is about partnership, bringing together youth and adults in collaboration and giving teens a space that amplifies their voices and perspectives. By providing a platform for teens to engage in conversations about health and equity, the program equips them with knowledge, confidence and leadership skills. Teens become advocates – not just for themselves – but for their peers, communities and future generations.

The stories and successes showcased in this report highlight the incredible impact of this work. Through community projects, leadership development and real-world experiences, TLC participants gain skills that prepare them for the future while also making a tangible difference today. Their passion and creativity strengthen our communities and challenge us, as health care providers, educators, caregivers and community leaders, to do better.

I invite you to explore this report with curiosity and excitement for what's possible when we invest in youth leadership. Whether you're a long-time supporter or new to this work, I encourage you to consider how we can continue to uplift youth voices and build even stronger youth-adult partnerships. Together, we can ensure that young people have the tools, support and opportunities they need to thrive.

In partnership,



Andrea Singh, MD

Pediatric Department Chair, HealthPartners/Park Nicollet
Parent of two teens, TLC Medical Advisor

Developing the next generation of leaders

HealthPartners Teen Leadership Council (TLC) is a school-year-long opportunity for high school students across the Twin Cities and western Wisconsin interested in health and well-being. The program develops the next generation of resilient leaders by amplifying youth voices and giving youth a platform to make change in their communities.



A teen-led model that began in 2019

Rooted in best practices for youth development, TLC:

- Provides opportunities for youth to form positive connections
- Engages youth in activities that inspire passion and community commitment
- Creates spaces for youth to share their voices and input
- Shares power and decision-making authority between youth and adults

How the council makes a difference

Members engage in a wide range of work and activities, including:



Consulting – Sharing insights to impact real-life programs and projects



Attending public health workshops – Engaging with professionals to explore how different factors influence our community's health



Volunteering – Giving back to the community



Leadership skill building – Exploring personal strengths and developing skills to grow as a leader



Relationship building – Connecting, collaborating and building a sense of belonging with other teens

Each program runs August to May with biweekly in-person meetings. As a best practice, teens receive financial incentives for their time, commitment and participation on the council.

I joined the TLC to gain leadership skills, and I got so much more than that. I got leadership skills, as well as friends, opportunities to help my community and well-being knowledge that I didn't even know about until I joined the TLC, and I will forever be grateful for that.

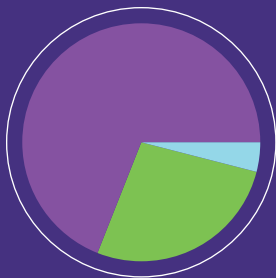
– TLC member

Meet the council

Each year, a diverse group of about 30 students from the Twin Cities metro area and western Wisconsin come together to participate in the TLC. Interest in the program has continued to increase each year, shown by the number of applications started and completed.

Year 1  20 applications started (15 completed)

Year 6  120 applications started (68 completed)

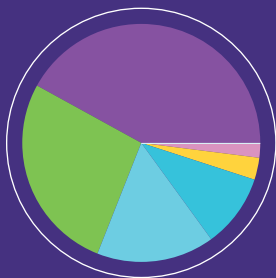


Pronouns

69% – she/her

27% – he/him

4% – they/them, other or undecided



Race and ethnicity

42% – White

27% – South/Southeast/East Asian

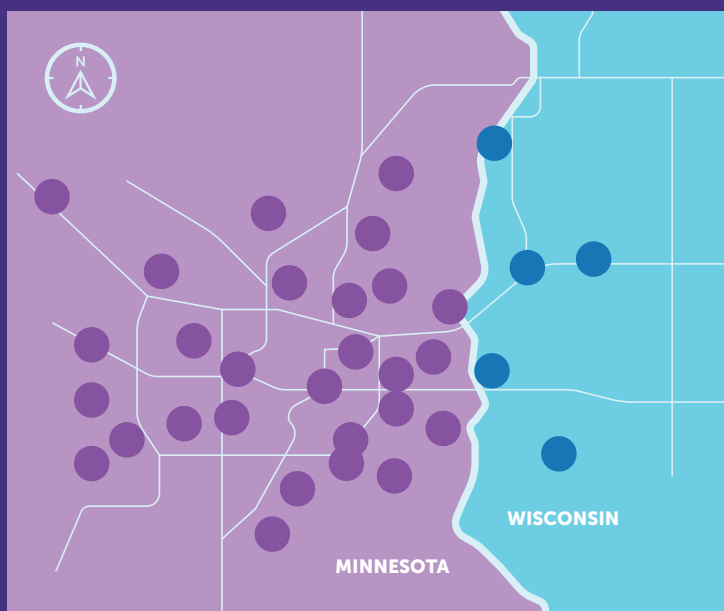
16% – Black

10% – two or more races

3% – Latinx

2% – unknown

<1% – Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander



Community reach

Minnesota

Afton | Apple Valley | Blaine | Brooklyn Park
Cottage Grove | Eagan | Eden Prairie | Edina
Forest Lake | Golden Valley | Hopkins | Hugo
Inver Grove Heights | Lake Elmo | Mahtomedi
Minneapolis | Minnetonka | North St. Paul
Oakdale | Plymouth | Richfield | Rogers
Shoreview | South St. Paul | Stillwater
St. Paul | White Bear Lake | Woodbury

Wisconsin

Hudson | New Richmond
Osceola | River Falls | Somerset

Recruitment and applications

TLC program staff use a variety of teen recruitment strategies including emails to schools, community organizations and HealthPartners colleagues, social media posts and information sessions for teens and families.

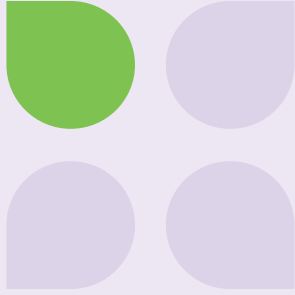
Applications include a recommendation letter from an adult highlighting the teen's skills, along with a written or video statement from the teen. Applications are scored and prioritized based on lived experiences, demographics and interest in community health.

Grounded in youth-adult partnership

TLC follows a youth-adult partnership model, which emphasizes meaningful collaboration between young people and adults. Youth gain confidence in themselves and build trusting relationships with adults. In return, adults value and seek out the ideas and contributions of youth and use their power to elevate and amplify youth voices.

Youth-adult partnership is at the center of the TLC framework





91%

of teens say they can
make decisions at TLC

100%

of teens **feel empowered**
to share their opinions
and ideas



The TLC has always
given me a voice and
all the members value
one another's opinions.
As a council, we have
created an open,
safe space where,
personally, I feel like
I can share anything.

– TLC member

Youth voice

Adults seek out, value and integrate youth insights, recognizing the unique and significant lived experiences that youth bring to the table. Empowering youth to find their voice helps them to confidently express their ideas and opinions. When youth feel validated and heard, they engage more fully, take ownership of their learning and contribute valuable insights that enhance the program.

Youth voice in action

Youth Day at the Capitol

Youth Day at the Capitol brings together hundreds of students from across Minnesota to learn how to effectively advocate for issues they care about by meeting with local elected officials. By attending as a group, members gain experience in civic engagement, build confidence in advocacy and connect with other teens who are passionate about creating change.



TLC and American Lung Association partnered to advocate for a bill banning flavored menthol and tobacco sales at Tobacco Day at the Capitol, 2024.



Consultations

TLC consultations provide a platform for members to share their insights on real-world programs and projects. Organizations request a consultation on a project to gather teen input. TLC members contribute valuable lived experiences and diverse, authentic perspectives that play a crucial role in shaping community-focused efforts.

Previous topics	Consultation partner
Adverse childhood experiences curriculum	State health department
Body image and high school nutrition curriculum	County health department
Community health needs assessment	Health system
Inter-generational programming	Local nonprofit
Messaging around stigma of mental health and illnesses	Public health campaign
Nutrition guide for teens	Adolescent nutrition program
School-based food pantries	Local nonprofit
Screen time conversations with providers	Health system
STI clinic and masking campaign messaging and marketing	County health department
Teen proxy/privacy access to their MyChart	Health system
Teen questionnaire for well-child clinic visits	Health system
Tobacco store audits	County health department



The TLC is very teen led. Most school clubs are run by an adult, and they make a lot of the decisions. But at the TLC, teens are in charge. This makes what we do feel more meaningful.

– TLC member



The inclusiveness that the program model provides has really lent itself to a set of very diverse voices, and that includes youth from rural communities and from urban communities and from private school educations and from families who financially struggle. That means that the TLC consultations really have a great value because the teens have so many different perspectives.

– TLC consultation partner



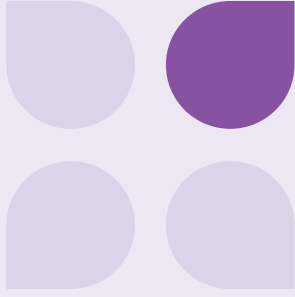
Consultation spotlight

One of the TLC consultations with the Minnesota Department of Health was on the topic of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). As teen leaders, they provided valuable feedback on statewide awareness and education efforts, offering a perspective on how ACEs are thought about by teens and communities. Their input helped shape messaging and outreach strategies to ensure they resonate with and effectively engage young people across Minnesota.



The TLC has benefits for both sides of participants. Youth tell us a lot that they want to have their own voice, that they want to feel like they have influence and power over what happens to them and decisions that are made about their lives. And the TLC gives them that – it gives them a space to be taken seriously. And from our perspective, the organization who requested the consult, being able to talk to youth directly is difficult, it makes our jobs easier when there are known, established places we can go where the youth have an interest generally in what we're doing and want to give feedback or insight.

– **Consultation partner**



95%

of teens say TLC provides **opportunities** they don't get to do other places

100%

of teens say they learned **new public health concepts** at TLC

“

The TLC is an opportunity to learn about what health can be defined as, and everything that contributes to our health. We have nothing that parallels that in school.

– TLC member

Experiential learning

Teens dive into real-life projects through experiential learning. This hands-on approach enables teens to apply what they learn in real-time, leading to a strengthening of their communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. This hands-on approach enables teens to apply what they learn in real time, leading to strengthened communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills.

Experiential learning in action

Public health workshops

The TLC explores a wide range of public health and community well-being topics. Often, teens are eager to learn about subjects they might not encounter in school. By collaborating with public health professionals, teens examine health issues such as the opioid epidemic, disordered eating, environmental health, food insecurity and more.



TLC monthly meetings

Teens take the lead in planning and facilitating council meetings. Co-chairs develop meeting agendas and coordinate activities, working closely with other teens on the council. Program staff play a supportive role by being present during meetings but intentionally stay in the background, stepping in when needed or asked. This approach allows teens to take ownership and builds independence.



100%

of teens feel valued
and say TLC is a **safe
space to be themselves**

91%

of teens say TLC
helped them **make
new friends**



We're like a whole family, it's been really nice to be able to be a team and be close – at the same time, we've all gotten pretty close by the end of the year.

– TLC member

Community connection and belonging

The TLC empowers teens to develop meaningful connections with other TLC members, adults, their peers and the broader community.

Teens are given a unique opportunity to connect with peers and communities they might not encounter in their daily lives or through traditional extracurricular activities. Through meaningful team bonding and community-focused activities, participants not only build lasting relationships, but also develop a broader, more inclusive perspective of other teens' lived experiences.



Community connection and belonging in action

Volunteering

Volunteering provides teens with opportunities to make a meaningful impact while strengthening their connection to the community. Teens get to choose which organizations they want to volunteer for, aligning their efforts with causes they care about most. Through volunteerism, teens not only give back to the community, but also build a deeper understanding of its challenges and strengths.





92%

of teens say coming to TLC **increased their confidence**

96%

of teens say they are more comfortable with **public speaking**



The TLC is an opportunity to learn about what health can be defined as, and everything that contributes to our health. We have nothing that parallels that in school.

– TLC member

Personal growth and self-discovery

The TLC emphasizes personal growth and self-discovery, empowering teens to make decisions, foster critical thinking skills and gain a sense of autonomy. Youth get to explore and build upon their personal strengths, boosting their confidence and self-awareness.

Members also get opportunities to explore diverse career paths, including health care and public health, broadening their awareness and aspirations.

Personal growth and self-discovery in action

Leadership and character assessments

Through assessments of strengths and character, teens gain valuable insights to grow as leaders. Adult facilitators guide teens through activities that encourage them to embrace and lean into their strengths, fostering an environment of empowerment and support.

Career exploration and networking

Teens are empowered to explore a variety of career paths through career exploration and networking. One example is a speed-dating-style networking event where health professionals connect with students at a TLC meeting. Teens rotate between tables, engaging briefly with each professional.



Impact of the Teen Leadership Council

Impact on participating teens

The TLC empowers teens to become confident leaders and contributors to their communities. Teens feel inspired to share ideas and perspectives, knowing their voices matter. They build their confidence in public speaking and other interpersonal skills, while feeling safe to express their authentic selves. Members also gain valuable knowledge and develop skills in meeting facilitation and civic engagement. These impacts go beyond practical skills – they strengthen teens’ resilience and well-being, preparing them to face challenges and thrive in the future.



95%

of teens tell us TLC creates a positive space where **teens and adults collaborate** with mutual respect

100%

of teens say TLC provides them with a platform and **meaningful opportunities** to create community change

100%

of teens say their growth through the program has **strengthened their motivation to excel** in school and pursue their career goals

100%

of teens thoroughly enjoy **TLC core activities**

“Programs like the TLC are important for teens because they are a stress-free space where students can take action while working with others, impact their communities, and become the best version of themselves.

– TLC member

“Our daughter learned important life skills (like leadership, planning, communication, etc.), gained confidence, and met other great young people!

– Parent of TLC member

Impact on alumni

TLC alumni navigate their post-high school journeys with confidence, purpose and the tools to engage meaningfully with their communities. The TLC shapes young leaders and creates a ripple effect of positive change that extends far beyond their involvement in the program.

100%

of alumni say that they frequently apply the **self-confidence and self-efficacy skills** they developed through TLC

100%

of alumni say TLC helped them develop a **strong, positive self-identity**

100%

of alumni share that TLC **improved their collaboration skills**, which they frequently apply in their post-high school endeavors

100%

of alumni say TLC influenced their continued commitment to **volunteering and community service**



“The community I found during my time in the program informed the kind of academic culture I was looking for. I sought out post-secondary institutions that had a focus on student engagement, community enrichment, and transforming education into action in the larger world. These are things I experienced in the TLC, and they have since become nonnegotiable values of mine.

– TLC alumni

“I grew into a stronger leader and a more aware community member. I also gained interest in the public health field and became a more well-educated friend in regard to health topics.

– TLC alumni

Community impact

The TLC program has become an invaluable resource for the community by connecting teens with local organizations to share their ideas and improve programs. By bringing together a diverse and enthusiastic group of teens, the TLC makes it easier for organizations to gain meaningful insights and feedback from young people.

60,000+

community members reached through volunteer initiatives

From distributing lifesaving naloxone kits and fentanyl test strips to preparing and delivering meals for individuals facing homelessness or financial hardship, the program continues to uplift communities.

1,800,000+

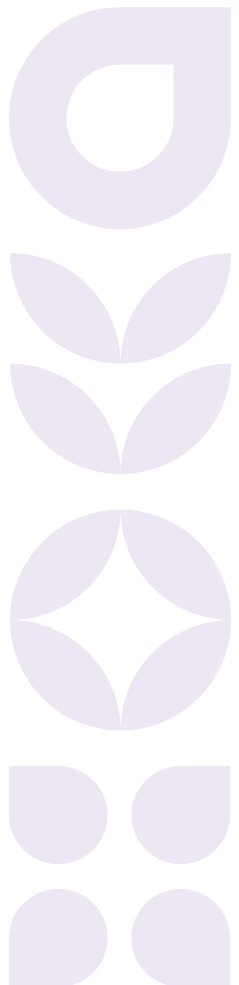
people impacted by the insights and contributions of teen consultations

From shaping food pantry options in schools to influencing health provider practices for teen check-ups and driving statewide awareness of adverse childhood experiences, members are using their voice to create lasting change.

5,000+

people connected with the TLC through community events

Community engagements include the TLC annual meeting, outreach booths at community events such as Youth Day at the Capitol and a podcast with the Minnesota Youth Council. Through these efforts, teens are fostering connections and driving meaningful engagement within the community.





Ways to get involved

Apply to HealthPartners Teen Leadership Council (TLC)

Applications for the TLC open every May. Visit healthpartners.com/teenleadership for updates and access to the application.

Engage teens in your work

Work with TLC teens to gain valuable insights and align your programs with youth needs. Let's collaborate to shape a stronger, more connected community. Visit healthpartners.com/teenleadership to submit a consultation request.

Support the TLC

Your generous gift helps empower teens to build confidence, become engaged leaders and create opportunities to make a meaningful impact in their communities. To donate, visit powerup4kids.org/givenow and select Teen Leadership Council in the Designation drop-down menu.

Stay connected with TLC



Scan the code to learn more and sign up for our e-newsletter



Follow us [@teenleadershipcouncil_hp](https://www.instagram.com/teenleadershipcouncil_hp)

“We're a generation of big dreamers. We see things not just how they are, but how they can be.

– TLC member

“The TLC is important to teens because it helps us get more perspective on issues happening in our communities. Being able to collaborate with teens from other communities, build ideas and create leadership opportunities together is an amazing and rewarding experience.

– TLC member

“It's a very ever-changing program, and I think [adults] do a good job of not sticking with the motto that 'we should do this because this is the way it's always been.' They have a very adaptive approach, and so I never felt like I was doing the same thing every day. I always felt like it was changing, and I was adapting, like I was growing alongside the TLC.

– TLC alumni

At HealthPartners, we believe when young people are given the opportunities and tools to lead, they create real and lasting change. The Teen Leadership Council is more than just a leadership program. It's a platform for youth voice, collaboration and action. By engaging in meaningful conversations about health, equity and well-being, TLC participants develop critical skills that empower them to advocate for themselves and their communities. HealthPartners is proud to support this initiative, recognizing that investing in youth today builds a healthier, more connected community for the future.



Pahoua Hoffman

Senior Vice President of Government and Community Relations, HealthPartners

