The Texas Foster Youth Health Initiative (TFYHI) builds relationships across child welfare and adolescent health systems to promote optimal health for child welfare-involved youth. This report describes our work and progress of this Initiative from July 2020 to December 2021.

**OUR GOAL:**
Youth in foster care feel connected, safe, and empowered and make informed decisions about their sexual health and relationships.

**WE:**
*Are designed by youth for youth.*

Our Young Adult Consultants will be leading the design of our youth engagement strategies that aim to empower, inform, and support youth in care.

*Value individuals and their experiences.*

Through continuous collaboration and engagement of stakeholders and participants, we are building experiences for youth and their caregivers that inform, support, and strengthen skills.

**RECOGNIZE NO ONE LIVES IN A BUBBLE.**
We take into account that thoughts and behaviors are shaped by relationships and the environment. Addressing the biases and barriers youth face will happen every step of the way.

**ARE THE FIRST STATEWIDE LEARNING COMMUNITY OF OUR KIND IN TEXAS.**
We’re not just delivering a sex ed class to youth or a training for caregivers. We are bringing together child welfare professionals and adolescent health leaders to develop sustainable interventions and improve systems.

**INCLUDE & SUPPORT CAREGIVERS.**
We recognize the critical part adults play in a young person’s life. Our Caregiver Consultants will help us develop tools and resources for adults so they feel comfortable with ongoing conversations about sex and relationships and can support the youth in their care.
We welcomed a new and passionate group of consultants:

We engage young adults formerly in foster care and foster caregivers across Texas to inform our intervention design. Last year, our six Young Adult Consultants supported every step of the development of our FAQs for Youth—from writing questions about accessing sexual and reproductive health care to reviewing the drafted FAQs for accessibility, relevance, and clarity.

We also collaborated with seven Caregiver Consultants to explore ideas for reaching and supporting caregivers. In our new set of videos on the importance of having conversations about sex and relationships, we interviewed three of our Caregiver Consultants about these conversations and featured strategies to use for engaging young people.

We’re looking forward to welcoming a new cohort of young adult and caregiver consultants in 2022!

Our Texas Innovation Network continues to grow:

Our network is growing with the addition of child welfare agencies that were selected through a call for proposals process. Each of our new partners—THRU Project, Trel’s Home for Children, Upbring, and Youth in View—represents a unique child welfare setting and brings expertise and passion for youth to the network. We’ll work with our new partners to create environments that are responsive to youths’ needs and provide sexuality and relationship education.

Across the state, our Network Partners are meeting with community stakeholders, including CPAs/RTCs, courts, DFPS, educational institutions, and mentor programs. We know that community engagement is essential to this work, our innovative interventions are designed to meet community needs and improve community collaboration to support youth in foster care.
We’re taking feedback to design new interventions:

In the last 6 months, we developed and piloted two interventions: Brave Conversations and UN|HUSHED: Providing Sex Education to Youth in Care. Over 200 stakeholders participated in pilot trainings, providing feedback that allowed us to refine the interventions in preparation for testing with target audiences. Expanded testing of our Brave Conversations intervention with the target audience already shows promising preliminary results. The following data is from 18 Brave Conversations participants. We will continue to gather data and feedback as pilot testing continues.

 significants increase in confidence talking with adolescents about sexual orientation and gender identity (*n*=17)

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<th>Before Training</th>
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<td>3.33</td>
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- Brave Conversations Participant

significant increase in comfort helping youth access sexual/reproductive health care providers (*n*=16)

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<td>4.25</td>
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- UN|HUSHED Houston Training Participant

significant increase in agreement that talking to youth about sex and relationships will help them feel more confident setting boundaries with romantic partners (*n*=16)

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<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.41</td>
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- Brave Conversations Participant

significant decrease in fear of retraumatizing youth by talking with them about sex and relationships (*n*=16)

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<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.94</td>
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- Brave Conversations Participant

Keep an eye out for our brand new youth curriculum, which will be piloted in April 2022!
5 organizations formed The Texas Innovation Network and 4 child welfare organizations joined our network.

277 caregivers and professionals participated in 49 hours of training.

281 stakeholders were engaged throughout the state.

Our next steps:

Expand testing of Brave Conversations and UN|HUSHED: Providing Sex Education to Youth in Care

Complete development of youth curriculum and beginning piloting

Work with our new child welfare partners to test the impact of multiple interventions at one agency

TFYHI BY THE NUMBERS

From July 2021 - December 2021:

If you have any questions about TFYHI, please contact TFYHI Project Manager, Sharon Hoefer at sharon.hoefer@austin.utexas.edu.