

Youth Engagement Initiatives

Objective 4.2: By 2030, increase the number of adolescents and young adults engaged in Title V-funded programs and initiatives by 10%.

Adolescent Engagement Internship

The Adolescent Engagement Intern position, established in FFY26 in partnership with KDADS Youth Leaders In Kansas (YLinK) program, will continue into FFY27. This role was created to bring an authentic, sustained youth voice into Title V work. The intern is embedded in the Title V adolescent health team while remaining connected to YLinK's network of youth-serving organizations across the state.

In FFY27, the intern will continue to grow partnerships with YLinK and other youth-serving groups across Kansas, helping Title V build and maintain relationships with organizations that center young people. This relationship-building work strengthens the broader ecosystem of youth engagement that Title V can draw on for input, dissemination, and community connection.

The Adolescent Engagement Intern will continue contributing to the YLinK newsletter, providing a regular channel for sharing Title V adolescent health priorities, resources, and opportunities with youth audiences and partner organizations across the state. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to select and lead a special project focused on developing interventions or programming for youth, allowing the intern to take meaningful ownership of an initiative and apply their experience and perspective to address a priority adolescent health need.

Community Connection Mini Grants

Youth Leaders in Kansas (YLinK) offers youth and young adults an opportunity to develop community awareness and youth leadership skills during the formative years of 12 to 18, focusing on mental health stigma reduction, suicide prevention, and behavioral health awareness. They operate with the support of State General Funds allocated by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS), with the local support and guidance of caring adult volunteers and community partners, and alongside the youth's primary caregiver(s), especially parents. YLinK provides youth with a unique learning experience as they interact with peers, supportive adults, and their communities in positive ways, laying the foundation for successful future endeavors as they learn and explore the real world and their ability to contribute.

YLinK creates intentional spaces where youth can connect with peers, practice leadership, and strengthen their advocacy skills in supportive environments. These peer-to-peer relationships foster a sense of belonging, reduce isolation, and help youth and families navigate challenges with confidence. Recent expansion of YLinK chapters has broadened access to meaningful peer supports that build resilience and prepare youth with and without special health care needs to engage in their communities and systems of care as leaders.

The 85+ local groups promote and provide programs that address mental health stigma reduction, suicide prevention, behavioral health awareness, youth voice, and advocacy.

There are also opportunities for youth to participate in the state legislative process and learn about politics and advocacy at every level.

In FY27, KS Title V will partner with KDADS to offer Youth Community Connection Grants to up to ten local YLink groups. This mini-grant opportunity supports the design and implementation of projects or events that raise awareness, foster connection, and build supportive environments, aligning with youth mental health and well-being. Projects may include, but are not limited to, community events, youth-led workshops, trainings, and collaborative outreach efforts. YLink Chapters will be invited to submit an application that includes a narrative outlining their proposed project with a detailed budget. KS Title V will review applications alongside KDADS colleagues and jointly make award determinations. Title V and KDADS will provide oversight and support to local chapters throughout their projects.