

# So Change It:

A Guide For Students



**Rights.**  
**Respect.**  
**Responsibility.**

**Advocates**  
**for Youth**

Rights. Respect. Responsibility.

[advocatesforyouth.org](http://advocatesforyouth.org)

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### About Advocates For Youth

Advocates for Youth (Advocates) envisions a society in which all young people are valued, respected and treated with dignity; sexuality is accepted as a healthy part of being human; and youth sexual development is normalized and embraced. In such a world, all youth and young adults are celebrated for who they are and afforded honest, affirming, inclusive sex education; access to confidential, universal sexual health services; and the economic, educational, and social power to exercise their bodily autonomy and make informed decisions regarding their health and well-being. [www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)

Advocates' Rights, Respect, Responsibility philosophy underpins all of the organization's work:

**Rights:** Youth have the inalienable right to honest, inclusive sex education; confidential, universal sexual health services; and the economic, political and social power that supports their agency, bodily autonomy, and self-determination.

**Respect:** Youth are due respect. They are leading the fight for equity and justice. Young people must be meaningfully involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of systems, policies and programs that affect their health and well-being.

**Responsibility:** Society has the responsibility to examine and dismantle systems of oppression that drive sexual health disparities and other inequities and to instead champion community initiatives, programs, policies, and systems that ensure equity and justice for all young people, their families and communities.

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# Why Create Change?

**"One child, one teacher, one book,  
and one pen can change the world."**

**— Malala Yousafzai**

**Young people are creating change across the world and in their own communities.**

Through everything from social media, events, and even artwork, young people are encouraging each other to care about public health and to work for a better world.

And this change can start with **you**. *So Change It: A Guide For Students* (Guide) can help you and your friends to change your world for the better, beginning with your own school.

**In this Guide, you'll find practical tips and advice on how to create change, including:**

- Advice on how to plan and run a campaign;
- A strategic step-by-step process to use your energy and assets wisely and usefully; and
- Concrete tips on starting a group, recruiting new members, and using social media.

The advice and tips are based on the experiences of young people around the nation. You can use and/or adapt the advice and tips to fit your situation and your goal.

**Follow students using the advice and tips!**

To show how this works in action, you will find a story running throughout the Guide describing the efforts of Sam (they/them pronouns), a fictional student at Anywhere High School (AHS). Hopefully Sam's efforts and experiences will give you a look at what you might expect as you work to accomplish your goal in your school community.

Sam's story focuses on getting students to visit the clinic in their community, and the Guide is written to reflect the same goal. But the Guide's advice and tips can help you no matter what your goal is for your school or community.

We hope that the Guide can help inspire you to create the change needed to build a healthier world in your school and community!

# **So Change It: A Guide For Students**

## **At A Glance**

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**ANOTHER WORLD  
IS POSSIBLE**

## What Is Organizing?

**Organizing is the process of building collective effort in order to create positive change in your lives.**

— Adapted from **Advocates For Youth's Youth Activist Toolkit**

**Organizing has to do with working towards positive change in ourselves, others, and the world around you.** Sometimes this means changing the narrative of who makes decisions and how those decisions are made. People can exercise control and power by making decisions for themselves and influencing others in their circles. We can challenge these ideas of decision-making by organizing. ***Organizing is the process of building collective effort as a group and using this effort to create positive change in people's lives.*** As an individual, it can be difficult to change behavior on a large scale. As a group, however, when we come together with collective effort, we can multiply our own strength with the strength of others to create change. Your role is to figure out what you want to change and how to make it happen.

### Change In Action

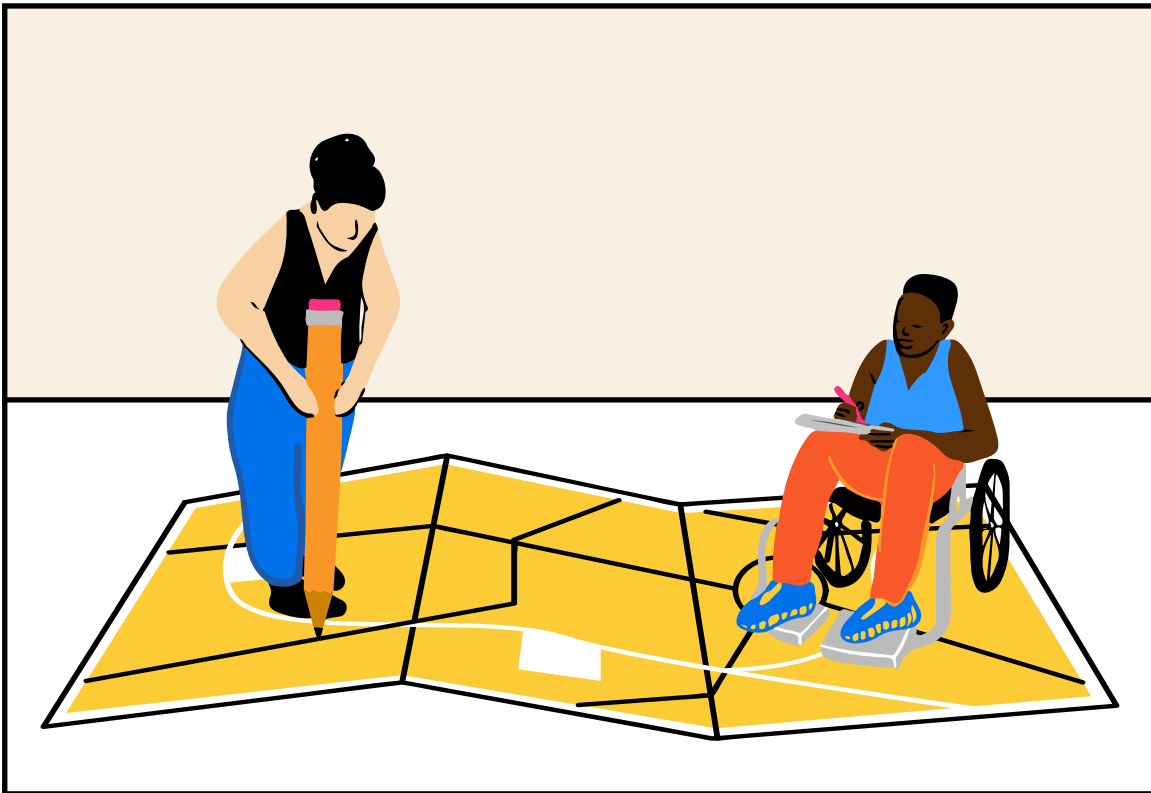
Sam goes to Anywhere High School (AHS). In their health education class this semester, Sam learned that students can go to the nurse to get referred to the local community clinic for things like contraceptives and sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests. But when they brought it up to their friends after class, a lot of them said they felt too awkward to even go into the nurse's office to ask for the referral. "I heard the nurse has to call our parents if we even mention condoms," said Sam's friend Cameron.

Sam wasn't sure if this was true, so they went to their English teacher, Ms. Jackson. Ms. Jackson cleared up that rumor, but the teacher was worried that other students believed the rumor and wouldn't go to the nurse for their sexual health needs.

Sam and Ms. Jackson agreed: they needed a plan.

The **National Health Education Standards** identifies the health skill of "Advocacy for Self & Others" to be taught in schools as part of a health class. **RMC Health** has developed tools and resources to help teach this skill for students to be able to build the capacity to promote their healthy behaviors and to encourage their peers to develop and maintain their own healthy behaviors. Engage with your adult ally and share these **Advocacy for Self & Others** health skill tools to support your skill development to positively impact the change you want to see with your campaign.

## Determine One Main Goal



**You may be concerned about more than one issue.** You may want to focus on STI testing **AND** on students' need for accurate, complete information about a whole range of sexual health issues **AND** on homophobia or racism - all really important issues. But to succeed, you need to focus on **one main goal** at a time.

Remember, this Guide uses the example of organizing a campaign to encourage students to visit the community clinic. Your goal could be different, but the steps to effectively creating change are the same.

## Understand The Problem

**As you begin thinking about having a campaign in your school to increase access to sexual health services, you and others might have questions that need to be answered before you can decide how to organize most effectively.** If students are not accessing sexual health services in your school or getting linked to services in your community, you need to know why. There could be several reasons. **You need to research!**

For example you might think that students don't get tested for STIs because school nurses aren't allowed to talk about testing. Research might show that:

- The district policy is vague and unhelpful on what services a nurse can talk about with students.
- The students don't feel comfortable asking the school nurse for information.
- The Physical Education (P.E.) teacher has a list of clinics that offer youth-friendly sexual health services, but not all students have access to their class.

### Ask Questions

**Depending on your goal, the questions you ask could vary.** Here are some questions you might want to ask to help figure out why students at your school are not going to the nurse to get a referral for sexual health services.

- Do students know they can go to the nurse for a referral to a community clinic for sexual health needs? If so, how do they find out this information?
- How many students are currently going to the nurse for sexual health referrals?
- How comfortable are students going to the nurse for their sexual health needs right now?
- Does your high school teach sexual health education? If so, does the curriculum include information on what services the nurse offers?
- Does the curriculum include information on community clinics that offer sexual health services?
- What are the state and local minor's rights laws and policies when it comes to sexual health services?
- Are the confidentiality policies clearly posted in the nurse's office or communicated to students?

### Get Answers

**Use knowledge of people in your school and community to fully understand the issue:**

- Search the Internet for your state and district policies for sexual health services. Look for minors rights to sexual health services, district confidentiality policies for health services, and what services can be offered for schools in your district. Your health education teacher, nurse, School-Based Health Center staff, counselor, social worker, or other school staff should be able to help you find this information.
- Talk to people who may have information about your issue. Begin with your friends and classmates, your parents, your friends' parents, the school nurse, the health education teacher.
- Talk with staff at a community clinic that offers sexual health services. There might be an existing effort to connect with the school and encourage students to seek services.

## **Build a Group:**

**Get Started, Run Meetings,  
and Make Decisions**





## Starting a Student Group

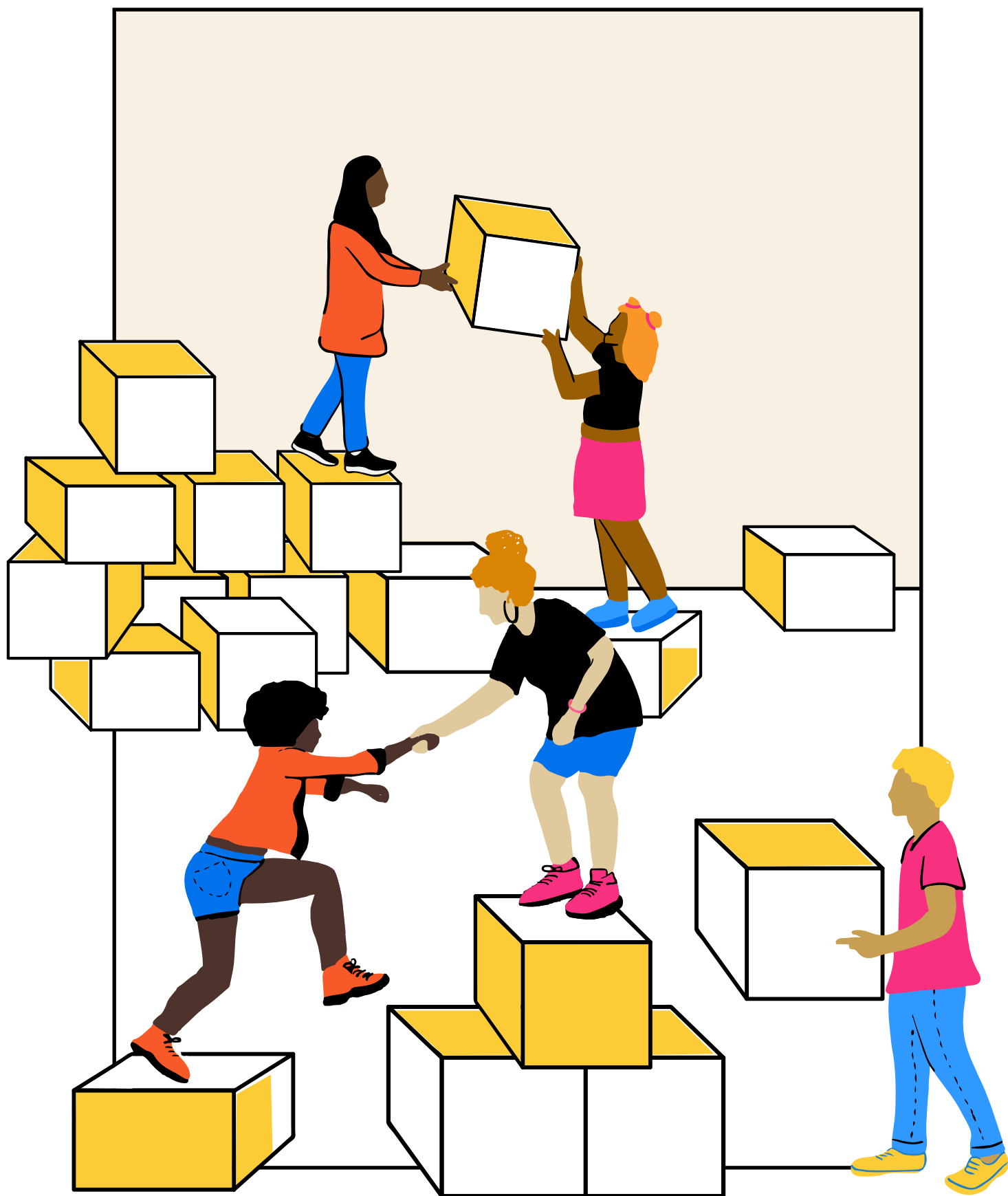
**A few of your friends or classmates are excited to learn more about accessing sexual health services at your school.** Consider starting a student group as a way to get more students interested in the issue and to make the issue more visible at school. If you don't know exactly how to start a student organization or club, here are some tips:

- 1. Use what's already created:** Look around. Are others also interested in your issue? Maybe there is already a student group that you could join or work with. Potential partners could include peer health educators, a gender-sexuality alliance, or a service club.
- 2. Talk to those in the know:** Ask those who are members of a student club or organization how it got started. Ask the faculty advisor how the club got started. Ask a school administrator for the rules and regulations for student organizations and what you need to start a new one.
- 3. Create structure:** Together, decide on the structure of your group.
  - How many leadership positions do you need?
  - What roles will members fill?
  - When, how often, and where will you meet?
  - How long will the meetings last?
  - How will you make the meetings enjoyable enough that new members will join and current members will keep coming?
  - What channels will you use to communicate about meetings and project activities?

### Starting a Student Group

Sam and their friend Alex decided to form a Healthy Teens Club (HTC) with the goal of promoting how to access sexual health services to the students at AHS. They knew that other students were doing the same thing in schools around the country. They went to the vice principal's office and got a list of requirements for starting a student group. To start a club, they had to have a faculty sponsor.

Sam knew that Ms. Jackson, the English teacher, might be supportive because they had written an op-ed on HIV/AIDS that appeared in the local newspaper. Then their classes had discussed the HIV epidemic afterwards. Ms. Jackson read their proposal, asked a few questions, and agreed to be the faculty sponsor for their club.



## Recruiting Group Members

**Recruiting friends and classmates that care about the issue is an important part of making this campaign successful.** It's important to have a diverse group that represents your school's student body, including backgrounds, ages, races, ethnicities, gender identities, physical abilities, and sexual orientations. Having diverse perspectives will help your campaign reach as many students as possible.

Work with your faculty sponsor to figure out how many people should be involved in the campaign. The size of the group will depend on how big your school is, but most likely it will be between 10-15 students.

### Recruitment Strategies

Working with your faculty sponsor, you should try to engage students from a variety of places:

- **Sign-up sheet:** Post a sign-up sheet on a common bulletin board in school or use an online form and post the opportunity on your school's website. The sign-up sheet can also be sent out via email to students. Make sure the sign-up sheet includes email addresses and phone numbers so you can stay in touch with anyone who's interested.
- **Existing groups:** Look for existing clubs and groups at your school where students are likely to have an interest in your issue. For example, peer health educators or a gender-sexuality alliance group could be great partners. Ask to present at a future meeting, or reach out to the student leader of relevant groups.
- **Classes:** Get permission to go into classes and talk about your campaign. Make sure that the teacher will allow you to pass around your sign-up sheet.
- **Lunch sign-up:** Get permission to set up a table during the lunch hour. Choose a place where you can interact with lots of students – like the quad or near the cafeteria door. Hand out flyers, talk about your campaign, answer questions, and get interested students' contact information.

### Hold an Interest Meeting

Make a list of all interested students and invite them to a meeting at school – after class or during lunch hour, or via a virtual platform. Offer a tentative date and time, and see how many can attend. You want as many of the interested students as possible to be there. If your interest meeting is in-person, be sure to have something that will draw them in – like free food or a movie. During the interest meeting, give an overview of your ideas for a campaign, an issue you want to focus on, etc. Be sure to also encourage those who attend the interest meeting to share their ideas as well. Then follow up with everyone who attended to set up your next meeting.

#### Building a Base of Support

Sam and Alex made posters advertising the first meeting of the HTC. They hung the posters everywhere they could. Sam and Alex created online posters that they could add to the school's website/social media accounts to spread the word. They wore buttons that said "Ask me about the HTC!" Anyone who asked learned what the club hoped to accomplish. Sam and Alex visited other student groups, including the Gender-Sexuality Alliance, the Key Club, and Student Government. They talked about the HTC and invited students to come to the first meeting. They also handed out flyers and made an announcement through their club's social media accounts, encouraging students to come. Fifteen people showed up! That was a great start for their first meeting!

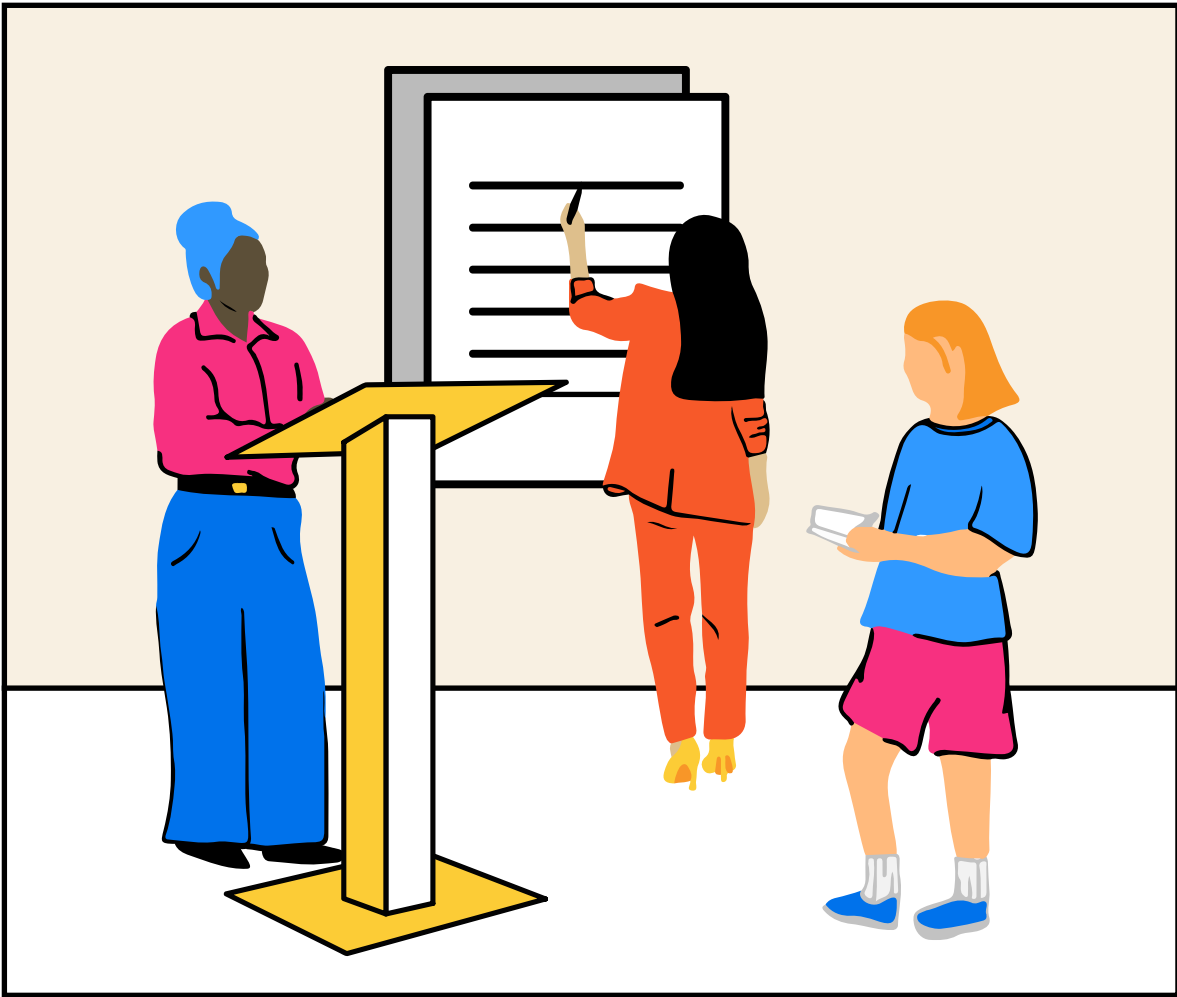
## Planning Your Meetings

**Now it's time to start creating your campaign!** Remember that a meeting can be fun as well as effective. Here are some things you might want to consider in planning a meeting:

- **Decide a time and location:** Choose a time when students are most likely to attend. During lunch? After school? Where can you meet at the school? Is an in-person meeting possible, or would a virtual meeting be easier or safer?
- **Hold your first meeting(s):** When first starting, hold a few widely publicized meetings to attract new members. At these first meetings, you will need to be able to discuss the issue and answer others' questions. Let people know where you are in your campaign. Tell them what you have accomplished so far and what your next steps will be. Find out who might be interested in helping with those next steps. Make the meetings fun, too, with food, music or a movie.
- **Decide how often you will meet:** After a month or two, develop a consistent meeting schedule and location. You can meet every week, every two weeks, or every month. It just depends on how much you have to discuss and what your group is doing. Whatever your group decides, try to stick to that schedule for at least a few months so people know what to expect.
- **Make an agenda:** One of the most important parts to having an effective meeting is a written agenda – a list of the things you will discuss. The agenda is the roadmap for the meeting.
  - List out items for the agenda and group them by type (announcements, discussions, and proposals) or by topic (fundraising, special events).
  - Create the agenda in advance and distribute it (via email) early enough that members can suggest additions or changes.
  - Post the agenda in a place where everyone attending the meeting can see it. Write it on a whiteboard or post it on a big piece of paper on the wall, or (if you're meeting virtually) share it in the chatbox of your virtual meeting.
- **Appoint someone to be the facilitator:** This person will run the meeting using the agenda. Members should be able to discuss each item or raise questions, as needed. At the same time, the facilitator may need to ask everyone to be flexible. For example, if an important item took an extra amount of time to discuss, the agenda may need to be adjusted and some items may need to be tabled until the next meeting. Or the facilitator may need to limit discussion, for example, with each person speaking only once on an item and/or for no more than one minute.
- **Fun stuff!** Icebreakers, get-to-know-you games, giveaways, and other activities are an easy way to make people feel comfortable and to keep a meeting lively. Try to have an icebreaker or something fun at every meeting to keep people engaged.
- **Important roles for any meeting:** Always appoint a **notetaker**. The notetaker will keep track of the main points of the meeting:
  - Who attended
  - Action steps agreed upon
  - Who commits to doing different tasks

Create a joint playlist made up of group members' current favorite songs. This is a fun way to be creative, bond over shared interests, and work together to create something.

Sometimes it's helpful to have a separate **timekeeper** as well, who will help the facilitator keep to the time allotted on the agenda. Or, if necessary, the timekeeper can keep track of how long each person speaks and advise when that person's time is up.



### The First Meeting

Sam and Alex asked Ms. Jackson if they could hold the first meeting in their classroom after school. The night before, they made cookies for students who would attend the meeting. They decided that Sam would facilitate.

They also made an agenda:

- Introductions + Icebreaker (Activities: Identity Game) – 20 minutes
- What is the Healthy Teens Club? – 5 minutes
- Brainstorm Goals – 20 minutes
- Next Steps – 20 minutes
- Schedule the Next Meeting – 5 minutes

## Facilitating Your Meeting

**A facilitator is more than someone who runs a meeting.** They maintain the energy of the meeting, ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak, lead the process of coming to decisions, and help members stay on track with discussions and ideas.

### Tips for Facilitators

#### Create a cohesive, supportive group

- Set a positive tone of respect for each member of the group.
- Set ground rules/group commitments during the first meeting that will be followed for all future meetings. Doing this helps to develop an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Watch for power imbalances. Point out these imbalances and work to ease them. Then be sure to recognize those who haven't spoken, giving them a chance to say how they feel about the topic.
- Be flexible with the agenda. It's a roadmap, not a law. You can deviate as much as necessary to accomplish the goals of the meeting.
- Remember that good listening includes watching for nonverbal cues, such as body language. Tactfully address these issues as they seem to arise. *Some of you look like you don't want to hear this. What's going on?*
- Immediately challenge speech that demeans or insults anyone, but without attacking the person who made the remark. *We've agreed that we will respect others, whether we like their position or not. Let's stick to the ground rules. Or, This is an inclusive group. We respect every student at our high school. And we are working to ensure a better future for everyone.*
- Challenge any harmful or stigmatizing comments that come up, such as comments rooted in homophobia, racism, sexism, ableism.

#### Encourage participation

- Small group discussion allows participants to share their perspectives when they might be unwilling to do so in a larger meeting. If people seem reluctant to talk about the issue, suggest that everyone breaks into smaller groups to discuss different aspects of the issue. Then one member of each group can report back to the larger group.
- If only a few people are talking, consider using a "go-around." Say that each person will be asked to speak in turn. No one may talk twice and anyone may "pass" if they do not want to speak.

#### Describe and document the group's work

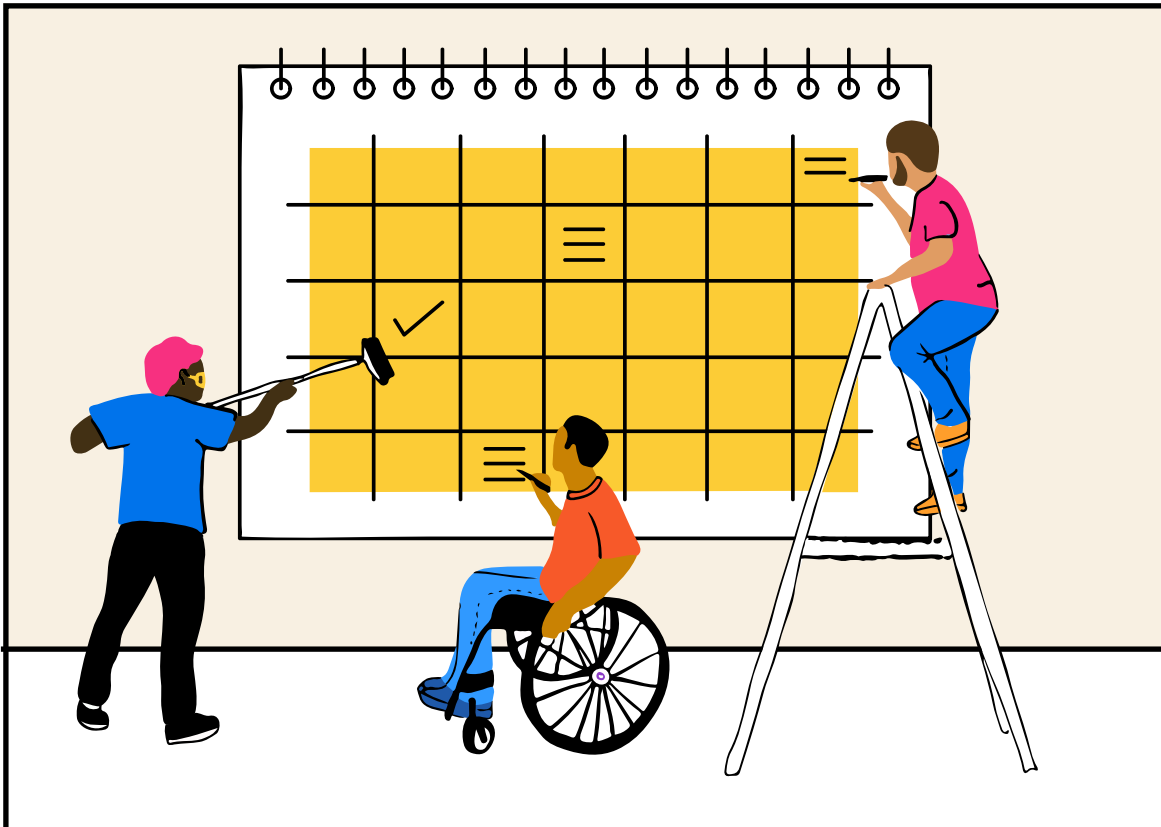
- Toward the end of the meeting, summarize key points, especially where people were in agreement.
- List action items to accomplish before the next meeting.
- When issues come up that are not on the agenda or that cannot be resolved at present, write them on a "parking lot" sheet. These items can be brought up at the next meeting. Or, people can follow up with research on the items and report their results at a later meeting.
- Take breaks during a long meeting. Also use an occasional energizing activity to make sure group members are engaged and excited about the campaign.

#### Rotate facilitators

- Rotate the responsibility of facilitating at each meeting. This way the responsibility is shared. Over time, everyone will develop leadership skills and get a chance to actively participate in meetings.

Portions of this were adapted from: BRIDGE: A Popular Education Resource for Immigrant and Refugee Community Organizers (National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, 2004) and from Education for Changing Unions (Burke, et al., 2002)

## Create a Strategy



**A strategy is an essential part of organizing because it helps you understand how each step you take will move you closer to reaching your goal.** A strategy can be defined as the method of building enough collective effort to create behavior change. A strategy is different from a plan because it involves collective effort and relationships. For example, if your group is putting on a social event, you don't need a strategy. You just need a plan to execute the event. However, if you want your school to help provide information and access to students for sexual health services, then you will need a strategy because you will need collective effort to influence behavior and program change/development.

A tool that can help you design an effective strategy is a strategy chart. The chart asks questions that you need to answer in order to plan your campaign. The chart has five columns. Each column addresses one aspect of organizing and allows you to think concretely about what you need to do. The chart allows your group to understand how you can best move your campaign forward. After the sample strategy chart (see *next page*), the next few chapters explain the Strategy Chart in more detail.

The Resources section of this Guide has a blank chart that you can use to chart your campaign. Here is the sample strategy chart, already filled in for you as if for a sexual health services campaign.

## Strategy Chart: Sexual Health Services at Anywhere High School

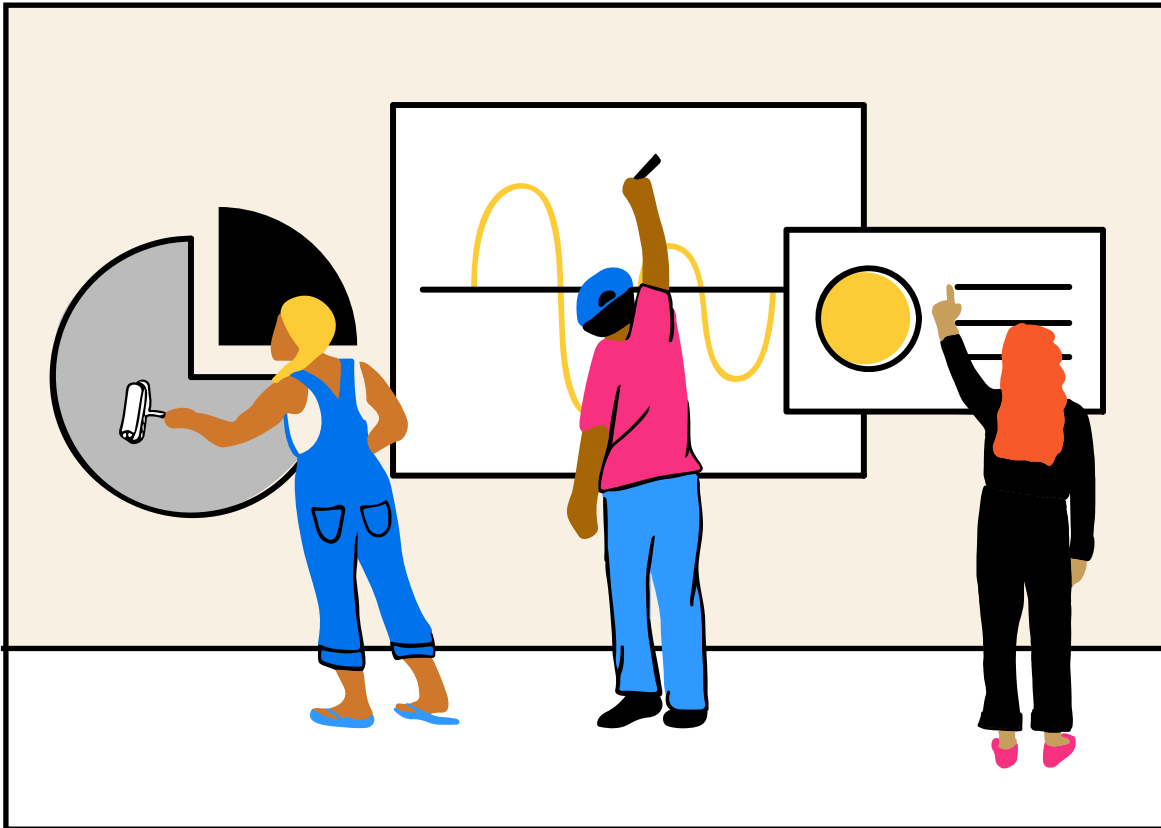
OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	GROUPS	AUDIENCES	ACTIVITIES
<b>Short-Term (3 weeks)</b>	<b>Strengths: # of people, schools, and organizations contacted</b> (Be specific and concrete.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contacts and relationships with youth leaders and community-based orgs.</li> <li>• Capacity to mobilize young leaders</li> <li>• Good idea and solid demand</li> <li>• 2 students</li> <li>• Staff advisor</li> </ul>	<b>Audience:</b> (Be specific.) Students at AHS	(Be specific.) Principal, Superintendent; Commissioner at Dept. of Health; Members of the City Council; Mayor; Board of Education members; School trustees	<b>Short-term:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up meeting with school administrators</li> <li>• Create proposal for campaign</li> <li>• Ask permission to use school social media account to recruit students</li> </ul>
Approval by school administrators to proceed with the campaign within 3 weeks.				
Promote the club on social media within 3 weeks to recruit students.				
<b>Intermediate (3 - 4 months)</b>	<b>Challenges:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Timing: need to organize youth over summer</li> <li>2. Inconsistent participation and small size</li> <li>3. Wariness among some parents, teachers, and other allies</li> <li>4. Too few people attended meetings</li> </ol>	<b>Supporters:</b> Local community clinic; Planned Parenthood; school gender-sexuality alliance club; Student Government Association; School Nurse		<b>Medium (means of using that activity):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members attend or present at other groups' meetings and events</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• School email</li> </ul>
Creation and adoption of a resource list of off-campus clinics that are in the area with the school nurse by month 3 of campaign.				
Increased student knowledge of sexual health services available through the school nurse by month 5 of campaign.				
<b>Long Term</b>		<b>Opponents:</b> Need to research		
Increased student utilization of the school nurse for referrals to local clinics for sexual health services.				

Created by Midwest Academy



# Identify What You Want:

## Set Your Objectives



**Strategy Chart Column 1: Objectives.** Think about what you want to achieve. The long-term goal of the campaign is what you ultimately want to see happen. The objectives are the steps you must take to achieve that long-term goal. Having short-term and intermediate objectives will let you break your larger goal down into smaller, more manageable, and more easily achieved steps.


- **Short-Term Objectives** are what you want to achieve in the near future. These should be things that will help you reach both your intermediate objectives and your long-term goal. They could include getting club members, convincing at least some of the school administrators to support your sexual health services campaign, and campaign approval.
- **Intermediate Objectives** are what you want to achieve during your campaign. That might mean: developing campaign materials and resources, running a social media campaign, hosting an event with the local community clinic to promote the services they offer, and getting supporters to encourage promoting sexual health services in your high school.
- **Long-Term Goals** is the purpose on which your entire campaign focuses. For example, increasing the number of students who access sexual health services through the nurse and referrals to the local community clinic.

## Creating Objectives

Objectives should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time specific, which are also called SMART objectives.


1. **Specific** – should be clear, simple, and defined.
2. **Measurable** – think metrics. How will you measure your success?
3. **Attainable** – should be within reach if you put in the work.
4. **Relevant** – should be aligned to the long-term goal of your campaign.
5. **Time-Specific** – create a timeframe for the completion of your objectives.

An example of an objective that is **NOT** a SMART objective would be:

 *"Find off-campus clinics."*

This objective is **not** specific, measurable, or time-specific (even if it is relevant to your campaign).

Instead, **try something like this SMART objective:**

 *"Creation and adoption of a resource list of off-campus clinics that are in the area in collaboration with the school nurse by month 3 of campaign."*

In this example, the objective is the creation and adoption of a specific list of off-campus clinics, is time-specific (by month 3 of campaign) and measurable, attainable, and relevant to the campaign.

### Setting Objectives

Sam and Alex's group decided that their long-term goal would be to increase student utilization of the school nurse for referrals to local clinics for sexual health services.

**Short-term objectives would include:**

1. Meet with school administrators within 1 week to learn about the policies of creating a student group/campaign to promote sexual health services.
2. Promote the club on social media within 3 weeks to recruit students.

**Intermediate objectives would include:**

1. Approval by school administrators to proceed with an awareness campaign within 3 weeks.
2. Creation and adoption of a resource list of off-campus clinics that are in the area, in collaboration with the school nurse, by month 3 of campaign.
3. Increased student knowledge of sexual health services available through the school nurse by month 5 of campaign

**Finally the group made a list of activities that would help them reach their objectives:**

1. Build the group's membership up to 15 students.
2. Research and identify clinics that can be added to the resource list created by the group.
3. Collect information on how young people are accessing sexual health services through word-of-mouth, talking to health classes or a survey.
4. Set up a meeting with the school district's communications team to be able to work on posting through the district's social media accounts or websites.

## Know Your Resources



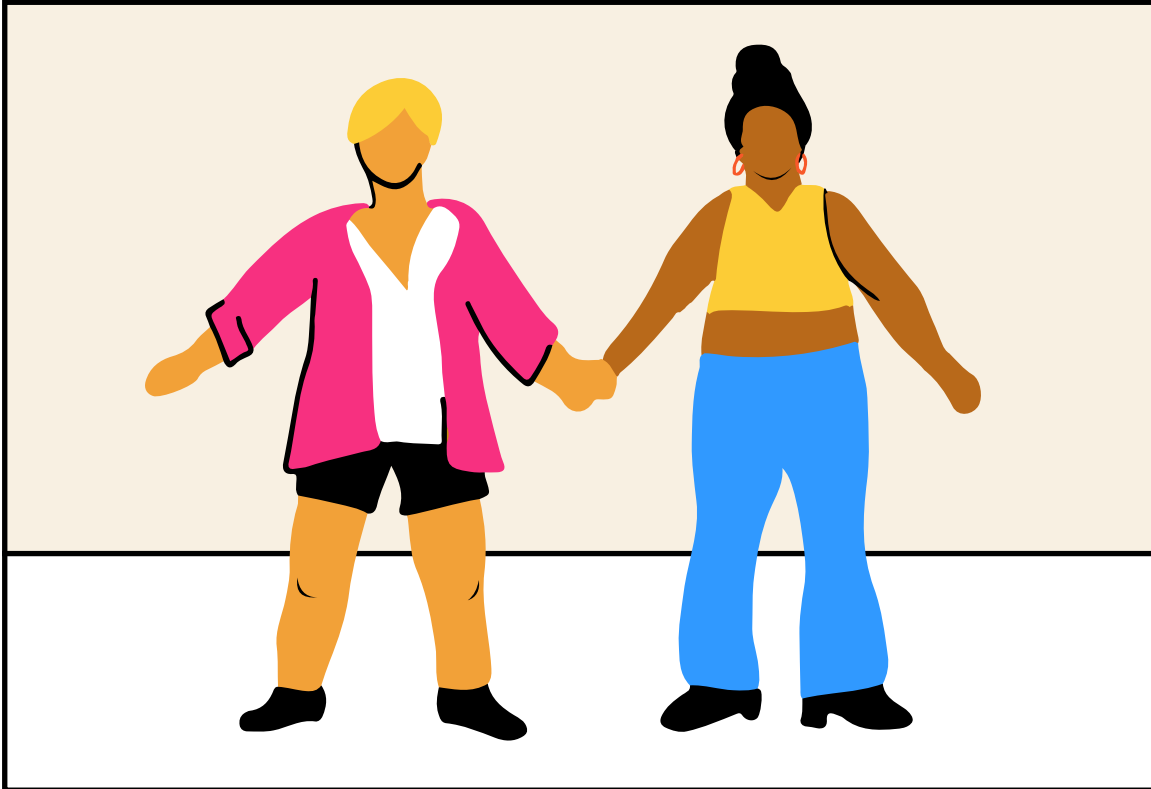
**Strategy Chart Column 2: *Resources*.** Resources are the specific things you already have that will help you in the campaign. Look at the strengths your group already has, as well as potential challenges or barriers your group may encounter. List these strengths and challenges. For example, maybe so far it's just you and two other friends. One strength is your commitment to the topic and the trust you have for one another. One weakness is your numbers. How many people do you need working with you to make the campaign a success? Think about the roles and tasks that need to be fulfilled. How many people do you need to recruit?

One simple way of grouping your resources is **based on your identified strengths and challenges**.

- **Strengths** are people, concepts, relationships, or physical items that will make your campaign successful. Your strengths include the number of people in your student group, staff support for your campaign, momentum or excitement around your idea, skills you or other group members have, and contacts and relationships you already have that you can build upon for your campaign.
- **Challenges** are anything that might present a roadblock to implementing your campaign. These can be both internal and external issues that might keep your group from achieving its goal. Internal challenges could mean anything from having too few members, conflicts between members, or not agreeing on a goal. External challenges might be having to recruit students over summer break, not having in-person learning, or hesitancy from school administrators when talking about sexual health services. By listing out these challenges in the Strategy Chart, you can start to look for ways to solve them.

## Working With Others:

### Identify Audience, Supporters & Opponents



**Strategy Chart Column 3: *Working With Groups*.** Think about your potential audience and potential supporters. Ask yourself, “who is affected by this issue? Who might have a stake in this issue?” List the names that occur to you. Now divide them into three categories: **audience, supporters, and opponents.**

- **Audience** consists of the people who are directly affected by the issue. They are important people to involve with your group and in your campaign. In this Guide, it’s the students who attend Anywhere High School.
- **Supporters** are the people who support your campaign but are not members of your group. Supporters could include teachers and parents who care about the issue, among others.
- **Opponents** are the people or organizations who might not agree with your campaign. Not everyone will be on board for the goals you want to achieve. They could cause roadblocks in your campaign, and you might want to consider strategies of how to handle them. Opponents could include school board members or parents who are uncomfortable with young people accessing sexual health services.

## Supporters

Once you have a solid group of committed students and have identified the group's goals, you can focus on strengthening your group. This might mean getting more members, but it can also mean finding and reaching out to people who aren't members but who will support your issue. These are your supporters. Supporters can either be individuals, such as teachers, or groups, like school clubs that work on related issues. You can also find supporters outside school. Such supporters might include: 1) community organizations that focus on health services and/or young people; 2) local businesses; 3) parents and parent associations; and 4) faith communities, among others.

In this example, the objective is the creation and adoption of a specific list of off-campus clinics, is time-specific (by month 3 of campaign) and measurable, attainable, and relevant to the campaign.

Potential supporters for any group working to increase access to sexual health services into local high schools might include: community health organizations; departments of health, local Planned Parenthood affiliates; HIV service organizations; education associations; gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender organizations; progressive faith communities; and local youth groups. If you have another goal, consider a wide range of community-based organizations that work with or for young people.

You don't have to have adult supporters. But adults who are willing to share their experience, resources, and contacts are valuable supports as they can help strengthen your campaign and your student group.

## Tips for Successful Outreach to Supporters

Once you have identified potential supporters, begin by reaching out to them for help.

- **Appeal to the common ground that you share:** People won't get involved in a campaign just because you want them to. Usually, people get involved when: the problem affects them personally; or they are already committed to the same or a similar issue; or they want to work with others who share their beliefs and interests. Approach your potential supporters from an appeal to common ground. Talk about how your issue affects them and their issue(s).
- **Talk about actions and events, not about meetings:** When contacting supporters, always request action, not attendance at a meeting. Bring up actions that people or groups can take immediately. For example, ask that supporters review messages or materials, collaborate on social media outreach, or co-sponsor an event. Recruiting for events or for specific work, like tabling, is far more effective than asking people to attend a meeting. If you do want an ally to attend a meeting, ask them to speak out on a specific point or topic – not just to sit and listen.
- **Attend other groups' events:** Show your interest in your supporters and their concerns. The best way to form an ally is to create real partnerships. Show that the supporters can count on you and your group by attending and even helping at the supporter's next event.

### Use your voice, tell your story

**Storytelling** is an effective way to share information about your campaign. People tend to connect with stories on a deeper, more personal level than facts or statistics. The more deeply they feel an issue, the more likely people will want to take action. To learn more about creating and being a storyteller visit [Advocates' Youth Activist Toolkit](#)

## Identify Campaign Audience

**Strategy Chart Column 4: Audiences.** An audience is the person or people who can help you achieve your goal. Your audience is always a decision-maker. What does your campaign want to change? Who can make that change? Your campaign audience is that person or group of people. Remember that any campaign can have more than one audience.

### Determining an Audience

The important thing to remember is that the audience is **always** an individual or individuals and **never** an organization or institution. For example, your audience may be **a specific member** of your Board of Education. Your audience is not **the** Board of Education.

Why is this? Individuals are far easier to move than any institution. Any board of education, for example, will have fixed policies and ways of doing business. The board, as a rule, will resist changing its fixed policies and ways of doing business. But each member has their own interests, aspirations, likes, and dislikes. So, you can appeal to the member's own interests, hopefully moving them to action.

**Remember, your critics are not always your opponent.** You may have audience members who might challenge or question your campaign focus or plan to achieve your campaign. For example your audience says, "Your campaign is not representative of the needs of the school community" or "Your student group is not inclusive of everyone." This feedback is something your student group can listen to and do something about, which can ultimately strengthen your student group and campaign.

**Attempt to maintain good relationships with all your audiences.** You can have a good relationship with your audience. In fact, you can be more effective when you maintain a good relationship with your audience. For example, your audience might be the school administrators. One administrator does support educating students on accessing sexual health services. Two other administrators don't know much about sexual health services so are more comfortable with not promoting sexual health services. You want to change their opinions. You also want them to act on what they've learned from you. You don't want to antagonize them.

### Audience

Members of the HTC did a little investigating. They discovered that another high school in Somewhere Town created a club that promotes sexual health services. Alex and another club member visited that school one day and talked to the faculty advisor that supports the school's HTC. He said that Somewhere Town leaves it up to the principal to decide what type of clubs/campaigns they are able to create in their schools.

So the HTC knew that Principal Matthews would be its campaign audience because he is the person who can approve their campaign.

## Pick Effective Activities

**Strategy Chart Column 5: Activities.** Activities are the methods you choose, to help you achieve your goal! **Don't pick your activities until you create an overall strategy.** Picking activities is the most fun part of the plan. You need to fill in this column last to be sure they fit into your overall strategy and help you achieve your objectives and your goal.

For example, part of your strategy could be getting approval from your principal to create a campaign that will encourage your high school peers to go to the nurse to access sexual health services. Your activities could include meeting with the principal and presenting them with data from a school survey on accessing sexual health services. Your activities might change as you work toward your goal, but your goal and strategy will remain the same.

Remember! There might be other supportive adults that can help you with your campaign, such as community health partners, or health education content specialists in your school district. Make sure to ask your faculty sponsor to connect you with anyone that might be relevant to your campaign.

Campaigns can go through several phases with starts, stops and roadblocks. Don't get discouraged! When picking activities, you may need to have several options to help you advance your goals. For example, you want to meet with your principal to gain approval but can't get a meeting. A back-up activity could be having a meeting with the vice-principal or dean of students and presenting your idea. They could then present your issue to the principal. Or, let's say you had planned to have the Department of Health table with you to share information about clinic services available to students, but they had to cancel. Plan ahead and use the collective efforts of your student club to identify a back-up community organization to table.

### Activities should:

- **Make sense to your members and supporters**
- **Be flexible and creative:** Think outside the box when developing your activities. Learn from what has been done successfully in the past. And don't be afraid to try something new to your community, like a t-shirt campaign or participate in GLSEN's [Day of Silence](#).
- **Build follow-up into your activities:** Each step you take in your campaign should set up the next step. For example, a social media campaign should lead to a virtual speaker event.

### Consider the following questions when picking your activities:

- **Who are you trying to influence with this activity?** How will it influence your audience? Is it likely to move your audience in the direction you want?
- **What kind of collective effort are you bringing to the situation?** Do you have a large group of people on your side? A well-known supporter? How are you using the collective effort you've amassed?
- **How are you following through?** How will this activity build toward your next step?

Check out the GLSEN [Day of Silence](#), where students take a vow of silence

against the harmful effects of harassment and discrimination of LGBTQ people in schools.



### Suggestions for Activities:

- **Pass out flyers** or post flyers online to raise awareness in your school. From the flyers, your classmates can learn what more about sexual health services and how it can benefit them
- **Ask to meet with the principal:** When you have a united group of students who are interested in this issue, you can ask to meet with the principal to express your interest in the issue. Before you go into the meeting, be clear about what outcome you want from the meeting. For example, you want the principal to approve a list or resources to distribute to students when they visit the nurses office for a referral.
- **Organize a sexual health services week in your school:** Get as many students as possible to participate. Students can: table resources, invite a local community health clinic to provide education, have a meet and greet with the school nurse
- **Survey** area pharmacies to see how easy it is to get condoms
- **Research** where confidential STI/HIV testing is available in your community
- **Develop** a palm card of specific community health services to distribute to students
- **Distribute** contact information for the local community clinic
- **Survey** students to see how much they know about preventing STI/HIV or unintended pregnancy
- **Document** students' experiences as they worked on the 'sexual health services week' and share the results with local news media, including your school newspaper. You can also use the survey as background information for other activities.
- **Hold a community forum:** Team up with a local organization, such as a community clinic, youth center, or reproductive rights organization to plan a community forum to show that you have strong community support for your goals. This is also a great way to show your audience the importance of your campaign.

**The CDC Get Yourself Tested for High Schoolers** is a campaign that encourages young people to get tested and treated for STIs and HIV using in person and digital media activities. The toolkit and resources provided give great guidance and examples for how to plan and implement a campaign, activities that could be conducted, campaign messaging, working with school staff and evaluation. Check it out and see how **Get Yourself Tested** can be used to support your campaign ideas!

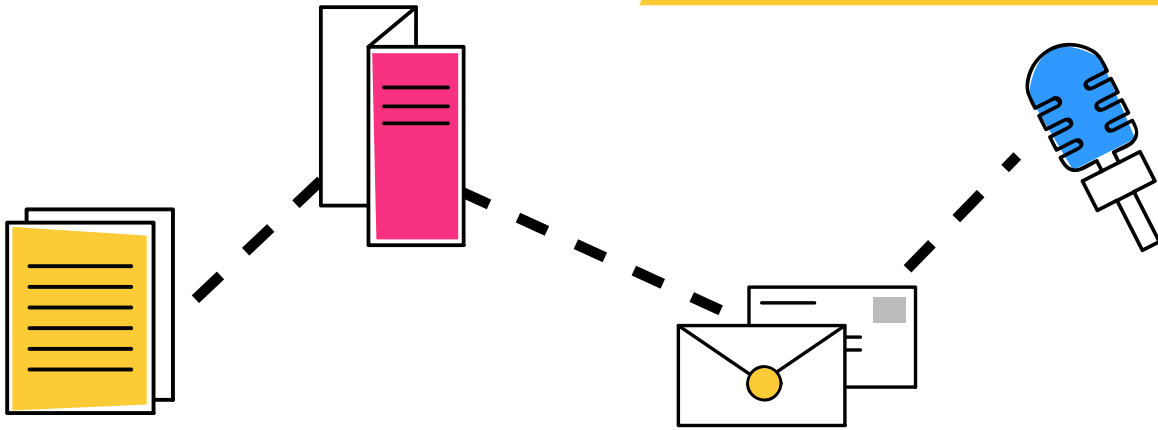
### Activities

The HTC decided on several activities for their campaign:

- Draft a formal letter requesting a meeting with Principal Matthews
- Develop a fact sheet about where to access sexual health services
- Hand out flyers about the club and a short fact sheet at locations where students are: concerts, after-school events, community events
- Create a digital flyer for the club's social media accounts
- Contact local off-campus clinics to determine if youth-friendly and if students can access sexual health services there
- Ask parents and local organizations for donations in order to buy and distribute HTC t-shirts and to provide free pizza at the meetings
- Secure an interview with a reporter for the student newspaper
- Create social media accounts to promote the club and campaign



## Work with the Media



**During your campaign, media coverage is an important way to create change and inspire action.**

So, how do you actually work with the media? You can write letters to the editor. You can submit an op-ed (an opinion article that appears opposite the editorial page). You can give interviews. There are other things you could do as well, but this Guide focuses on these three things.

You can work with your school's own media (newspaper, website, or radio station) and also with the local media in your community. Start with the media in your school, especially your school newspaper. With coverage in the school newspaper, you'll have a chance to learn how students and teachers react to your issue. There might also be an opportunity to work with your school district's communications department – make sure to ask your faculty sponsor if there are other district media resources you can use.

### 1. Writing a Letter to the Editor

Letters to the Editor (LTE) are a great way to get your message in front of a wide public audience. Even if your letter is not published, it is important for educating and persuading editors to dedicate coverage to the issue. The following guidelines may be helpful as you draft and submit your LTE.

#### Things to Keep in Mind

- **Pay Attention to Instructions:** Letters to the Editor are short (usually under 200 words) but more information on how and to whom to submit a LTE is usually found on the paper's website. This often includes guidelines on what the paper looks for in LTEs and following these guidelines will increase the likelihood that your letter will be printed.
- **Respond to a Published Article:** Connect it with something that is already happening in the news. Your letter will have a greater chance of being printed if it is in response to an editorial, op-ed, or frontpage story from the past few days. Begin your letter by citing the original story by name, date, and author.
- **Write the Way You Speak:** Editors want letters to be original so be sure to include your main talking points. It's also extremely important to keep sentences simple and avoid big words or overly academic language. It's best to assume that your audience is reading at an 8th grade level.
- **Author:** Strategically choose your author based on who will be most credible and persuasive to your audience. Consider someone who can provide an interesting perspective, is well-respected in a related field, or provides a counter-intuitive point of view in support of your argument.

## Structure

- **Introduction:** After citing the original story you are responding to, open your letter by refuting or supporting the claim made in the paper's original story and establishing your qualifications for doing so.
- **Supporting Evidence:** Use the next few sentences to back up your claims and advocate for your position. Try to focus on the positive such as why your position is right or good, rather than harping on why the other author's position is dangerous or bad.
- **Closing:** The end of your letter should always highlight a call to action. This includes calling on a legislator, institution or other third party to make a change or increase support for your position.

*See the example letter to the editor on page 30*

## 2. Writing an Op-Ed

"Op-ed" means opposite the editorial page. An op-ed is an opinion piece, submitted by someone in the community. To be published, your op-ed must stand out from other pieces that have been submitted for possible publication. Here are some tips for writing an effective op-ed.

- **Must be no longer** than 700 to 750 words, typewritten and double-spaced. Be sure to check the newspaper's word limit.
- **Remember, shorter is better!** Sentences should be short and punchy (10 or 11 words maximum).
- **Address only one main point in the op-ed. Keep focused on your message.**
- **Avoid** jargon or technical phrases.

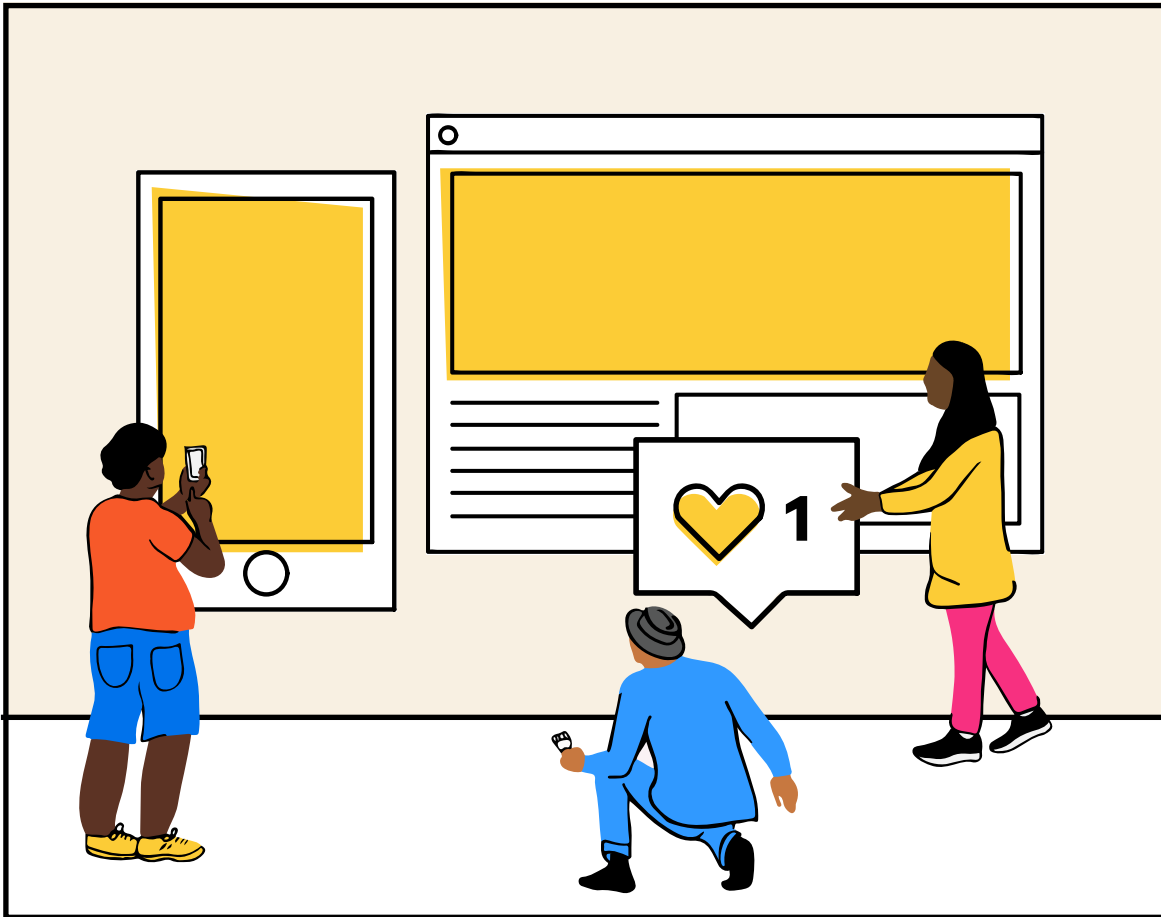
*See the example of an op-ed on page 31*

## 3. Giving an Interview

Giving an interview is one of the most important ways you can bring attention to your campaign. If you have the opportunity to be interviewed by your school newspaper, school TV channel, or local newspaper, here are some tips about to discuss your campaign in an interview:

- **Have three key points** that relate to your main goal/message. Then make those points (no matter what questions the reporter asks!)
- **Bridge** to your key message. If a reporter's question seems off topic, bring it back around to what you want to say. For example, you might bridge by saying, "That's an interesting question. However, I think the real issue is..."
- **Be concise** and give answers that are 10-15 seconds in length. Always speak in complete sentences. Speaking in complete, short sentences means reporters won't need to edit your statement and what you say is less likely to be incorrectly quoted or taken out of context.
- **Do not lie** even if you don't know the answer. **Don't make something up.** It's okay to say, "I don't know" or "I'm not sure." Always offer to find the answer. Then be sure to get back to the reporter before their deadline.
- **Be ready** for tough questions. Prepare your answers in advance and practice making your point. Try practicing with another group member or supporter.
- **Listen to the question carefully** — if you don't understand the question, ask the reporter to clarify.

## Use Social Media for Your Campaign



**Social media has impacted the way we communicate, share, and build relationships online.** Social media is a tool that makes sharing your message through large networks of people relatively easy. You are probably familiar with social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube for personal use, but you can use social media to share your story, recruit supporters, and get the attention of your audience.

### What Do You Want to Achieve?

In addition to your larger campaign goal, objectives, and activities, you should create concrete goals and strategies for social media for your campaign. Creating strategies allows you to monitor your success and impact, and to be aware of the risks that are involved.

To know how your social media strategy is performing, you have to create goals. The goals you create should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time specific, also called SMART goals (as seen in the **Creating Objectives** section of this Guide on page 14).

## Steps to Creating a Social Media Strategy

**1st** — create social media goals that align to your campaign. Each goal you create should be:

- a. **Specific,**
- b. **Measurable**
- c. **Attainable,**
- d. **Relevant, and**
- e. **Time-specific.**

**2nd** — know your audience. Your audience will determine what kind of content you can create for your social media platforms. Your followers are real people. Finding out their wants and needs will help you engage them on social media. With this campaign, your audience will be your classmate or your friends. Knowing your audience will also help you choose the type of social media channels your campaign can use.

**3rd** — create and curate engaging content. What you post on social media should be driven by the following criteria:

- a. what your audience likes,
- b. what topics interest them,
- c. what they like to help with, and
- d. what your campaign is trying to promote.

→ Determine what kind of content your accounts will focus on and where your audience will be able to find that information.

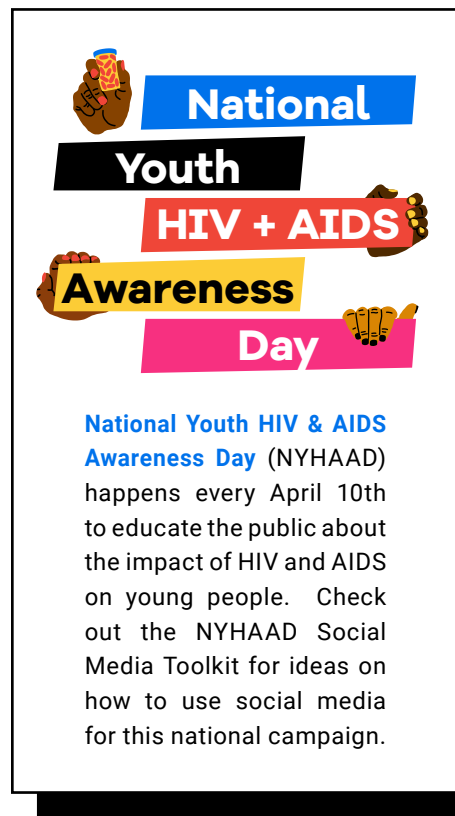
- **4th** — make sure your social media presence is as timely as possible. Learn when the best times are to post so that your audience is always engaged. You can then make sure that you are always available to answer your followers' questions on your campaigns' channels.
- **5th** — figure out what is and is not working so you are able to figure out what to improve. Monitoring your social media campaigns in real-time allows you to make minor adjustments to your social media strategy and this will help you avoid making time consuming improvements.

## Social Media Best Practices

When writing for social media, you want to think about your voice and engaging personality. Take into consideration what words are uniquely you, uniquely local, the way you reply and debate in the comments. Make sure to grab someone's attention with bold words, emojis and questions. Remember that social media is designed for short attention spans so make sure to make things short.

### Writing for Twitter

- **Short** — Twitter was meant for 140 characters
  - Studies show that 100 characters or less is best
- **Front-load** unique info/perspective
- **Break it up**
  - Enter key
  - Use Emojis
  - Use all caps strategically



## Writing for Instagram

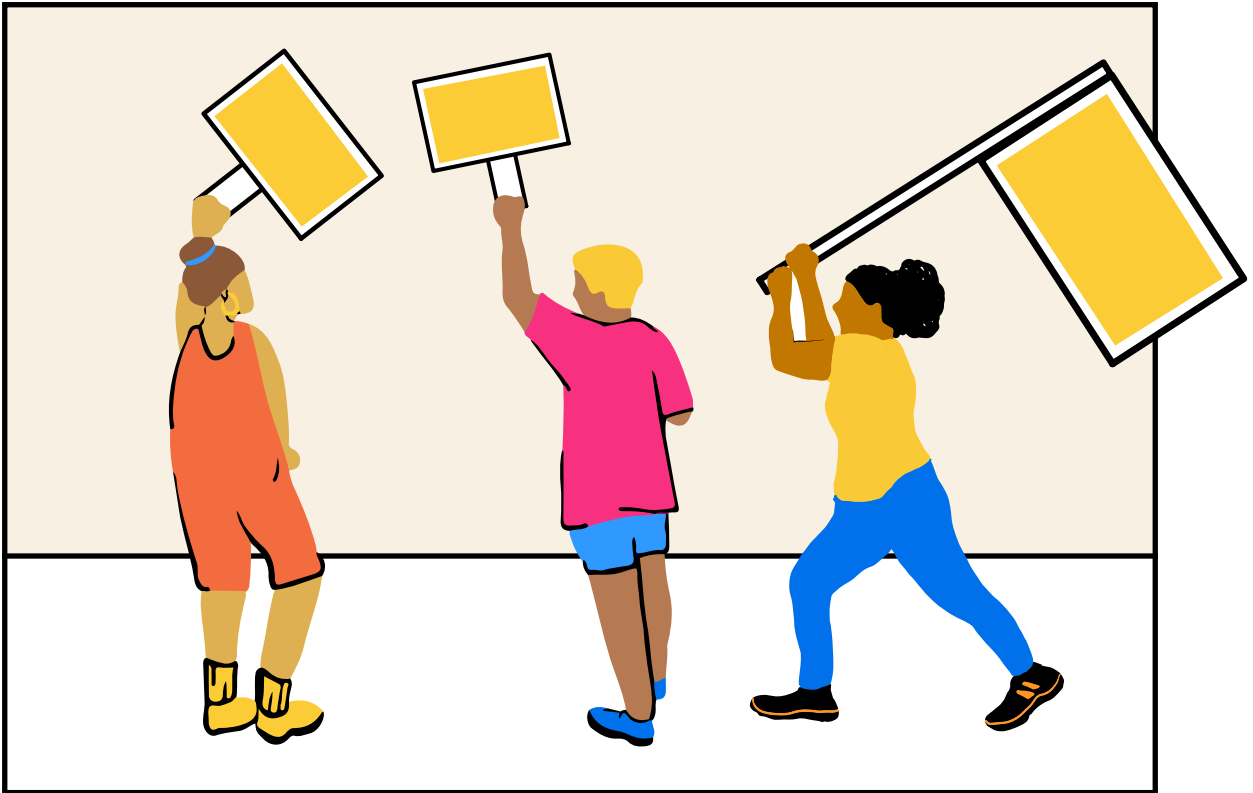
- **What you write is important for reach**
  - Push for comments and debates. Be sure to REPLY to every comment so your post continues to show up on people's social media feeds.
  - Tell people to tag a friend which will allow regular readers to see
  - Add hashtags you know but then research popular hashtags to add
  - Tag others and give them shoutouts so they can give you shoutouts in return
  - But for the most part, the image is your post
- **Additional best practices**
  - Add location for location-specific reach
- **Instagram will show your post or story to people in that location**
  - Instagram stories are just that – stories!
  - Five frames to tell a story
  - Use polls, questions, etc. to be more interactive
  - Use location and hashtags to promote and bring people out
- **Tangible Tools**
  - Social Media Apps (Unfold, Canva, Phonto)
  - Media Resources (TheOpEdProject.org)
  - Survey Resources (Google Forms, WuFoo, SurveyMonkey)



### Social Media Plan

Sam and Alex decide they want to use social media for the HTC to promote the use of off-campus clinics for students at AHS. First, Sam and Alex meet with their school's administrator to learn about their school's policies on creating social media accounts for their group. Sam and Alex then create a social media strategy plan that aligns with their goal of encouraging students at AHS to utilize sexual health services. Once Sam and Alex create SMART goals for their social media campaign, they figure out who their audience is so that they know what kind of content they can post. Then they determine which social media platforms they should utilize for their club/campaign. Sam and Alex figure out what type of content they can post by using best practices for social media. By posting content on their social media platforms, Sam and Alex will be able to spread information about the HTC and the campaign online.

## So, Are You Ready to Act?



**We hope that the Guide has helped you by explaining some of the key elements involved in organizing to implement a campaign.** Reading the Guide and sharing it with your friends is just the first step. Now is when the fun part really begins: it's time to put your ideas and the skills you've learned into action!

Advocates for Youth is with you in your efforts to encourage your classmates to utilize sexual health services (or HIV prevention education, condom availability, an end to homophobia, or whatever your issue). Please keep in touch with Advocates about how things are going in your school and whether this Guide is helpful to you. Advocates, as well as many other organizations, are here as resources for you. Don't hesitate to reach out for help. (See the Resources section below). Remember, you aren't alone! In fact, you are a part of a national and international movement fighting for sexual health services, condom availability, effective HIV prevention, and an end to homophobia.

Good luck!

**Advocates For Youth**

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Washington, DC 20005

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[www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)

📷 **advocatesforyouth**

🐦 **AdvocatesTweets**

📘 **Advocates4Youth**

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## Check out These Resources!

### [ACLU](#)

Find out what your student rights are when organizing. Go directly to the administration at your school to ask about what is and is not allowed in terms of activities. Contact the state's department of education to learn what the state education code says about students' rights.

### [Advocates for Youth's Collected Resources and Tools](#)

Advocates for Youth offers a collection of fact sheets, press statements, and reports.

### [Advocates for Youth - Rights, Respect, Responsibilities \(3Rs\) curriculum](#)

A K-12 inclusive sexual health education curriculum that includes lessons on accessing sexual health services and resources online.

### [Advocates for Youth - Sexual Health Services](#)

A youth-friendly services best practice resource page.

### [CDC - GYT: Get Yourself Tested](#)

Get Yourself Tested is a toolkit encouraging young people to get tested and treated for STDs and HIV to protect their health.

### [CDC - Sexual Health Services \(Fact Sheet\)](#)

A fact sheet outlining how schools, administrators, and districts can make sexual health services more accessible to their students.

### [CDC - What Works: Sexual Health Services](#)

From the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention, this page provides information on sexual health services.

### [Go Ask Alice](#)

Columbia University's Health Education Program site has questions and answers on all kinds of relationship, sexuality, and sexual health issues.

### [HIV InSite](#)

Developed by University of California at San Francisco, Center for HIV Information, this site is an excellent source for comprehensive, in-depth information on HIV and AIDS.

### [I Wanna Know](#)

From the American Social Health Association, this site offers information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual health, and how to deal with peer pressure.

### [It's Your \(Sex\) Life](#)

From the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, this site provides reliable, objective sexual health information for young adults.

### [Rewire News Group - Sexual Health](#)

An online community and publication serving individuals and organizations committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### [Sex Etc.](#)

Developed by University of California at San Francisco, Center for HIV Information, this site is an excellent source for comprehensive, in-depth information on HIV and AIDS.

### [SIECUS - The Youth Access to Sexual Health Services Act \(YASHS\)](#)

This fact sheet provides an overview of The Youth Access to Sexual Health Services Act of 2017.

### [SIECUS - Ensuring Equitable Access To High-Quality Sexual Health Services](#)

Ensuring Equitable Access To High-Quality Sexual Health Services is a report that aims to address sexual health care in a comprehensive and integrated approach.

## **Samples to Guide Your Efforts!**

- Strategy chart for you to use in planning your own campaign
- Sample survey on sexual health services
- Example of a letter to the editor
- Example of an op-ed

OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	GROUPS	AUDIENCES	ACTIVITIES
Short-Term (3 weeks)	<b>Strengths:</b> # of people, schools, and organizations contacted (Be specific and concrete.)	<b>Audience:</b> (Be specific.)	(Be specific.)	<b>Short-term:</b>          <b>Medium</b> (means of using that activity):
1.				
2.				
3.				
Intermediate (3 - 4 months)	<b>Challenges:</b>	<b>Supporters:</b>		
1.				
2.				
3.		<b>Opponents:</b>		
Long Term Goal				



## Survey:

### Let's Talk About Accessing Sexual Health Services

Please do not write your name anywhere on this survey. We want the results to be entirely anonymous and confidential.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual Orientation (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ Race (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you ever needed to access sexual health services?

YES NO

If yes, in what grade? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, check topics that you needed to access: (check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ HIV Testing \_\_\_\_\_ Pregnancy Test \_\_\_\_\_ STI Testing  
\_\_\_\_\_ Contraception \_\_\_\_\_ Condoms \_\_\_\_\_ Pregnancy Counseling  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe): \_\_\_\_\_

If no, would you ever go to a school staff person to get help with finding resources to access sexual health services?

YES NO

*If you answered no to question 1, you do not need to fill out the rest of this survey.  
Thank you*

2. Did you go to a school staff person to help access these sexual health services?

YES NO

If yes, who did you go to?

\_\_\_\_\_ School nurse \_\_\_\_\_ Health teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Physical Education teacher  
\_\_\_\_\_ Social worker \_\_\_\_\_ Counselor \_\_\_\_\_ Other

3. If yes, did the school staff person have community resources to help you access these sexual health services?

YES NO

If yes, what type of resources were provided?

4. Was it easy or difficult to identify a school staff person to help you?

EASY DIFFICULT

If difficult, what would have made it easier for you?

5. Would you go to a school staff person again if you needed help accessing sexual health services?

YES NO

Why or why not?

6. If the school staff provide you information on accessing sexual health services where would you like to access it?

\_\_\_\_\_ Poster \_\_\_\_\_ Brochure \_\_\_\_\_ School website  
\_\_\_\_\_ One Pager \_\_\_\_\_ Via text \_\_\_\_\_ Health related website

**Opinion: Distributing condoms in high schools must coincide with better sex education.**

**Regarding the Sept. 4 Metro article “Condoms offered at local Md. schools”:**

I am a student at Albert Einstein High School in Montgomery County. When I learned about the Montgomery County Council’s **recommendation** that condoms be distributed at all of the high schools in the county to mitigate a **recent spike** in sexually transmitted diseases, I realized I don’t know much about the transmission of STDs and how to stay safe. My friends were also uninformed — for example, worrying about obtaining diseases from toilet seats.

So, as much as the distribution of condoms may be a step in the right direction, the larger issue is that students are not receiving a sufficient education about STDs and how to prevent them. Therefore, Montgomery County needs to reevaluate the health curriculum to improve sex education and better serve the students. If students are better informed on how to protect themselves, there is an even greater chance that transmission rates will decline.

**Georgia Broitman**, Kensington

**With PrEP, HBCUs Miss The Mark**

Germany Gray

**Here's Why Latinx Students Need Access to PrEP on College Campuses**

Daniel Nava Cabral

**Doctors Aren't Offering Young People PrEP. That Has to Change.**

Tyunique Nelson

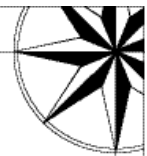
*These Op-Eds were written by young people who are part of Advocates for Youth's Youth Activist Network*



# Advocates for Youth

Young • Powerful • Taking Over

1325 G STREET NW, SUITE 980  
WASHINGTON DC, 20005 USA



**CHARITY NAVIGATOR**

Four Star Charity