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 July 2022.

**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.
Our staff collaborated with youth in foster care, caregivers, and community stakeholders to design THRIVE, an inclusive new sexuality and relationship curriculum for youth in care. Our 10-hour curriculum empowers youth to make informed choices about their sexual health and build skills for healthy relationships.

Our team piloted THRIVE with 68 youth in four communities across Texas, with positive feedback from youth participants and professionals. Learn more about the curriculum and check out our THRIVE resources for youth!
We are testing our intervention for professionals:

Everyone has questions about sex, sexuality, and relationships—but for kids in foster care, finding answers from trusted sources can be challenging. That’s why we partnered with UN|HUSHED to create a training for child welfare professionals. Our workshops provide strategies for trauma-informed conversations with youth and medically accurate resources on sexuality.

This year, we continued piloting and testing our UN|HUSHED training across Texas. Participants were overwhelmingly satisfied with the training. Almost 85% indicated they were “very satisfied” with the training, and 96.2% stating they were “very likely” or “somewhat likely” to talk more with youth about sexuality and relationships following the training.

UN|HUSHED TRAINING
PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

Participants’ confidence supporting young people around sexual health, healthy relationships, and identity increased. (n=56)

1 Not at all confident

Completely confident 5

Participants’ self-perceived knowledge about trauma, sensitive responses to challenging youth behaviors, healthy relationships, and coaching youth to take care of their sexual health increased. (n=55)

1 Not at all knowledgeable

Completely knowledgeable 5

Participants’ positive expectations about what would happen if they were to talk to youth about sexual health increased. (n=55)

1 Not at all positive expectations

Very positive expectations 5

Participants’ perceived challenges for talking with youth about sexual health and relationships decreased. (n=55)

5 Many challenges

No challenges at all 1

“The most useful part was] realizing that you don’t have to say everything perfectly when you begin a conversation with a youth.”

- UN|HUSHED participant

“In foster care, sex is always negative. The strength of the program was to show that sex is normal and healthy.”

- UN|HUSHED Participant

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- UN|HUSHED Participant
Our next steps:

- We will be onboarding new child welfare agencies to the Network in September 2022.
- We will be refining our interventions with ongoing feedback from participants and stakeholders.
- We will be sharing our lessons learned in upcoming training and conferences. See our newsletter to learn more.

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

TFYHI BY THE NUMBERS

From January 2022 - June 2022:

- 9 organizations formed The Texas Innovation Network
- 363 caregivers, mentors, professionals and youth attended a TFYHI Training.
- 321 stakeholders were engaged throughout the state.