

# Wisconsin PATCH: Engaging Youth in State-Based Adolescent Health Initiatives

PATCH Leadership Team: Amy Olejniczak MS MPH, PATCH Founder & Director; Erica Koepsel MA, Director of Youth Engagement; Chelsea Aeschbach MPH CHES®, Director of Impact & Evaluation

## INTRODUCTION

In Wisconsin, the state Department of Health Services funds several organizations to support its Adolescent Health Program. The Wisconsin-based PATCH Program serves as a key asset in the state's youth engagement efforts. PATCH implements its own youth programming and also provides expertise and technical assistance statewide.

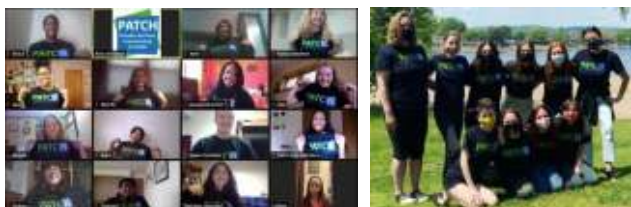


Image: Virtual and In-Person PATCH Youth Programming

## BACKGROUND

PATCH began in 2010 as a community-based initiative seeking to promote open and honest conversations between adolescents and their health care providers. Run by a local 501c3, the program evolved and grew over the years – replicating into various communities across the US and launching new initiatives to support adolescent health. Wisconsin PATCH was formed in July 2019 to serve as a hub and community of practice for all PATCH programming in the state.



## METHODS

PATCH brings youth voice into important adolescent health conversations while also providing the necessary knowledge, resources, support, skills, and opportunities needed to become healthy, connected, and thriving adults. Youth meet regularly as a team for ongoing enrichment and serve as workshop facilitators and/or consultants on adolescent-focused projects and initiatives. PATCH also provides communities and organizations youth-driven materials, resources, and programming to integrate into existing adolescent health efforts.

## RESULTS

At present, Wisconsin PATCH consists of 10 adult staff and 70+ youth across the state. Together, they are:

- Working with providers to improve quality of adolescent care, services, and education;
- Empowering Wisconsin youth to become involved in their own healthcare and transition process;
- Bringing youth voice into various adolescent health initiatives, such as those related to COVID-19 response, health curricula, mental health, screen time, and sexual violence prevention;
- Supporting other organizations toward effective youth engagement in their related work; and
- Learning and growing as adolescent health champions and advocates.

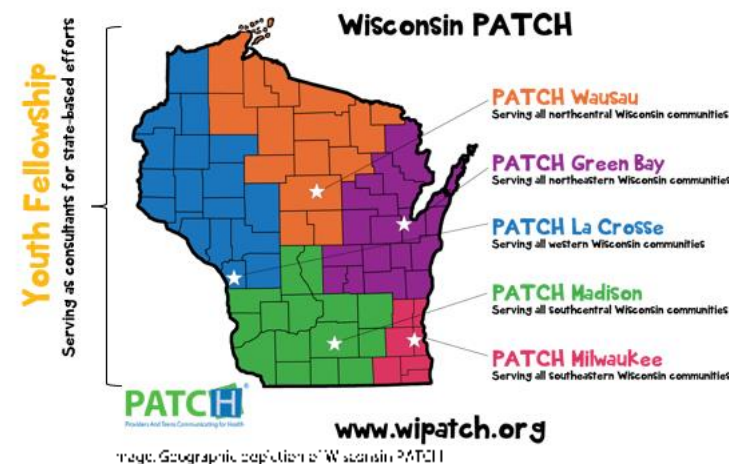


Image: Geographic depiction of Wisconsin PATCH

## DISCUSSION

Young people have a critical, yet often untapped, role in advancing adolescent health and well-being. Their involvement can come in various forms with varied benefits.

Wisconsin PATCH has become a hub for youth engagement in the state. Efforts are supported by Title V, SRAE, PREP, RPE and other state-based foundations and funding streams. These partnerships have enhanced youth engagement in state-based adolescent health initiatives and streamlined efforts towards improving adolescent health.

PATCH has helped support Title V NPMs 10, 11, and 12 and has several programs/resources in the AMCHP Innovation Hub.