



Illinois Coalition for School Health Centers

A project of the Illinois Maternal and Child Health Coalition

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Youth Engagement

ICSHC wants this year's Advocacy Day to be the most successful yet! We invite all supporters to attend including school health center (SHC) providers, school staff and parents. Most importantly, we would like as many students as possible to participate. Who better to ask for increased support of SHCs than the students who utilize their services? By engaging youth in the democratic process firsthand, they will learn the power of their own voice in advocating for something that directly affects them.

How to Begin Engaging Youth

ICSHC wants to make it as easy as possible for SHC staff and others to bring youth to Springfield on April 9th. Here are six quick steps to begin engaging youth:

1. **Start now:** The sooner you start identifying youth and other interested parties, the easier it will be to organize in time for April 9th!
2. **Set a Goal:** Try and set a goal for the number of youth you would like to bring to Advocacy Day. Be realistic...and optimistic! Although we want to engage students who utilize the SHC, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. Look to existing groups and organizations within the school that could benefit from attending Advocacy Day. Organizations like a Health Careers Club, the SHC Student Advisory Board, or Student Council are a good place to start. Check with your counseling department at your school and find out if your school offers service learning hours. Telling students that this is an opportunity to build their resume is also good incentive for students to become involved.
3. **Identify Youth Leaders:** Select qualified students to help you spearhead this initiative. Pick students who get along with each other and with whom you like working. Not only will these students help you plan for Advocacy Day, but they will probably do most of the recruitment themselves. If you can, try to pick at least one underclass person, so that your recruitment process will be even easier next year.
4. **Look into School Rules Immediately:** It is very important that you find out exactly what each student needs from the school to be able to attend Advocacy Day. We have included our consent form in the on-line Awareness Month Toolkit, but please ask your principal if it is adequate and if anything else is required. Some schools require a minimum number of chaperones, their own permission forms and/or a separate permission form from their governing school district. ICSHC is here to provide further explanation for school authorities. Start now! We don't want you to be left behind last minute after all of your hard work!

5. **Engage Others:** Work to engage as many people as possible in the recruitment process. Talk to history, civics, health and social studies teachers to see if an Advocacy Day would fit into their curriculum. If people can't make it to Advocacy Day, let them know that they can still be involved. Ask students, parents, teachers, principals, and superintendents who are unable to come to Springfield to write letters to their state legislators advocating on behalf of SHCs. These letters can then be hand-delivered by students, teachers, and SHC staff that do participate in Advocacy Day.

6. **Plan Youth Trainings:** Once you have students committed to participating, schedule a training at your school. This training should last around thirty to forty-five minutes and can easily be given over a lunch period, in a history class, or after school. You may want to plan a couple trainings so that you can check in with students periodically and ensure that all the paperwork is prepared. Contact Megan Erskine at (312) 491-8161 if you would like further information.