



## **Video Transcript: Ask Me Anything: Ensuring Equitable, Safe, and Supportive Environments (Jacklynn)**

**Jacklynn (00:00):** I want young people to feel heard, I want them to feel respected, and I want them to feel like they are empowered and have the tools and self-confidence that they need to succeed in life. Ask Me Anything: Equitable, Safe, Supportive, and Inclusive Environments. Hi, my name is Jacklynn Ware and I'm with UT Health San Antonio, and today, I'm going to let RHNTC ask me anything about equitable, safe, supportive, and inclusive environments.

**Jacklynn (00:28):** What are three things you do to create safe and supportive spaces for youth? Some of the things we do to create a safe and supportive space for youth are having a continuous feedback loop. It's really important to us that we're regularly checking in with our students and our Youth Leadership Council and asking for feedback. And not only that, taking action on that feedback. Another thing we incorporate is voice and choice. It's really important to us that our students are involved in any decision-making process. For example, we have a Community Service Learning Committee that's part of our Youth Leadership Council, and these students help plan our community service events. Another thing we do is we make sure our students know that they have the right to pass. Talking about reproductive health can definitely be a sensitive topic for young people. And of course, we always want to encourage our students to challenge by choice, meaning this is a safe space, we encourage you to challenge yourself, but we want our students to also know that they have the right to pass if needed.

**Jacklynn (01:24):** Tell me about the first time you felt like you created an inclusive environment for youth. I think one of the times that stood out to me where I was like, "wow, what a great space we've created," was when our students had the opportunity to make three videos regarding teen health topics, and one of the topics they chose was mental health, and they got to be involved in brainstorming ideas, they got to be involved in production and directing and got to act in the videos. This video was sort of a roundtable discussion style, and I remember watching them just being so impressed about this safe space that they made not only for themselves, but for other students to talk about their mental health, for them to share their passion, and how as a community we can help impact and improve teen mental health.

**Jacklynn (02:09):** What was one moment in the last year that you're most proud of related to fostering optimal environments for youth you serve? Sometimes we don't realize that our proudest moments are our proudest moments until much later, and that's definitely true with me. With our Youth Leadership Council, we held a spring break event and we talked about healthy and unhealthy relationships. We talked about teen dating violence, setting boundaries. What are red flags? And it was a really successful event, and it wasn't until a few months later, towards the end of our YLC year, where we asked students to complete the end-of-year survey and a student wrote in that because of that spring break event, they had the strength and courage to speak out in an unhealthy relationship. And of course, as a health educator, that broke my heart to know that a student was in that situation, but it also made me incredibly proud to know that because of that event, that student left with skills and knowledge and tools to help get them out of an unhealthy relationship. And, you know, I made sure to follow up with them, and just knowing that we were a safe space to talk about that was incredibly proud.

**Jacklynn (03:08):** What tips do you have for other projects looking to incorporate trauma-informed approaches into their activities? Don't be afraid to ask the youth what they need.

**Jacklynn (03:17):** An example of this is with our Youth Leadership Council, we were going to talk about teen dating violence, and I asked our student officers from our Youth Leadership Council, “hey, what do you need for this to be a safe and supportive environment?” They mentioned things like setting group agreements, setting boundaries, letting students know they can leave the room if needed, making sure there was resources there if they started experiencing some emotions, you know, having traumatic memory warnings. These were all things they said that would really help them.

**Jacklynn (03:44):** If you could design your ideal environment for working with youth, what would it look like? I think my ideal environment would one have no transportation barriers. Texas is quite large and there's not a lot of public transportation. So first thing first, no transportation barriers for our youth. I would also make sure that there is plenty of food and food that is inclusive to all dietary restrictions, allergies, cultural influences. Those would definitely be some of the biggest things. And of course, I'd want it to be a space where students felt safe, or students were able to share their opinions and leave with tools that are going to help them grow for the future. This video was created by the Reproductive Health National Training Center, RHNTC.