



## **Video Transcript: Ask Me Anything: Youth In Action**

**Speaker 1 (00:00):** Ask Me Anything: Youth in Action.

**Chris (00:04):** Hi, I'm Chris Cole from Planned Parenthood of the Heartland.

**Jacklynn (00:07):** Hi, my name is Jacklynn Ware, and I'm with UT Health San Antonio. What is the best part of working on your project? I think the best part of working on my project is getting that one-on-one connection with youth, getting to see them grow, getting to see how much they have changed from our programs, getting them involved in teen health initiatives in their community. It's just so inspiring to see, and I'm always just so amazed by the hard work they put into our program and to our community in San Antonio.

**Chris (00:36):** What is the special something that your project offers youth that they might not get from other programs or services? Our Youth Council. There's so many folks out there serving youth in the community and families, and our Youth Council enables us to pull together youth from all over our area, the metro area, who have different perspectives, different identities, and give them the resources and the information and the support that they need to share information with their peers, to reach out and do community outreach, to coordinate events in the community, and just being able to give youth that voice. Getting the opportunity to watch them grow and bring other youth into the program, and that's pretty unique in our area. I know of several other organizations that have tried to organize Youth Councils, and they weren't as long-lasting. So I feel like that's a really important and unique part of our project.

**Jacklynn (01:33):** I think something special that our program has is that it's a fairly large group. Last year was about 80 students, this year we're looking about 90 students. We split up our Youth Leadership Council into four zones: North, South, East and West. And these students get to meet on their respective side of San Antonio. And I think that's really unique because it does help alleviate some of the transportation barriers, they get to meet students that also live on their side of San Antonio, and they also get access to some of the services that are available in their area that they may not have known. One of our meeting locations was at a computer library, and one of our students is like, "I had no idea this was here. It's just down the street from me. Like, this is so cool." I think having such a big group of diverse students and then getting to meet on different parts of San Antonio really opens their eyes to the community and what's out there for them. What is the best part of working on your project? I get to make so many great connections with young people and they are just so inspiring. I am always amazed with my students and all the work they put into our Youth Leadership Council and our Teen Health Initiative, just getting to see them grow, getting to see how much they change, having that impact on them, and knowing that they're taking skills and tools with them that are really going to impact their life in the future. It's just my favorite thing to see.

**Chris (02:53):** This year, we had youth come up with the idea to do a Dungeons and Dragons themed sexual and reproductive health education in their community, and over about a six month period, they wrote an entire campaign for Dungeons and Dragons that was sexual and reproductive health themed, where the characters in the game went through different obstacles in accessing resources, had questions about how they might talk to their trusted adult or their caregivers about what they're experiencing, how they might get to health centers for services, how they could share information. So it was a really cool campaign they did. And then the youth found the location, a local gaming place to be able to hold this event. They invited not only youth in the community, but they invited parents and caregivers to come learn more about it. The staff really, we got out of their way and let them do this.

**Chris (03:45):** Not only did we have a dozen new kids playing Dungeons and Dragons and learning about sexual and reproductive health, but all the other folks that were at the gaming cafe were curious about what was going on in that room, and the posters and the resources we had there. So we were able to have a whole impromptu community resource fair alongside their event. I don't think any of that would have happened if staff, myself, other adults in the space had been organizing that. That was a 100% youth-led event, and it's one of the things we're most proud of. What are you most proud of related to your work advancing health equity for youth? I'm going to go back to our Youth Council that we have, working very closely with our community partners to pull youth in from all over the area, from different school districts. We have some youth that are home-schooled, we have some youth that are in alternate school programs. So I feel like we're having, each year, a better and better representation of all the youth that we are trying to serve, rather than just pulling from a specific district.

**Jacklynn (04:49):** I think the thing I'm most proud of is how large our Youth Leadership Council has grown, and I just love that we have such a big group of students that are interested in teen health, that are interested in making an impact, and are interested in being leaders in their community. What keeps you committed to positive youth development? I think what keeps me committed is seeing them grow. With our Youth Leadership Council, we hold the recognition ceremony at the end of the year, just to acknowledge all their hard work and all the things they've done for the program. It is my favorite event. I love just having a moment to recognize them, shine their achievements. Parents come, we give out prizes and certificates and awards. And for some students, this is the first time they've really felt recognized, appreciated. Sometimes, just having that moment where families can come together to honor their student, can make a really big impact on those family connections and it's just my favorite moment and really keeps me going.

**Chris (05:46):** This video was created by the Reproductive Health National Training Center, RHNTC.