



TAG in Action: West Virginia Adolescent Health Initiative

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow**® (TAG), the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

The Goal

The West Virginia Adolescent Health Initiative supports collaborative, community-based efforts designed to develop the assets youth need to thrive and become successful.

The Game Plan

The West Virginia Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI) supports a dedicated network of eight Regional Adolescent Health Coordinators. The coordinators provide technical assistance to youth, parents, teachers, health care professionals, regional networks, and civic groups on improving adolescent health. AHI has fully embraced the Search Institute's "Developmental Assets for Adolescents," which identifies 40 positive experiences and qualities that allow children and youth to thrive. AHI offers asset presentations, facilitates community-building asset initiatives, and works with schools to administer the Search Institute's asset survey.

AHI is committed to responding to the needs of youth and communities throughout West Virginia. In 2016, AHI developed and administered a survey to gather input from youth and parents on its programmatic efforts. The survey also inquired about the need to address bullying and cyberbullying – an issue that was raised by youth. In total, more than 4,500 individuals responded to the survey, including 3,131 youth and 1,450 parents. AHI shared the survey results with Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), a key partner organization. Based on the results, SADD Youth Leaders designed a statewide anti-bullying campaign called "You've Been Heard" and also filmed a video that was featured at the campaign's launch in January 2017.

The Winning Plays

The survey of youth and their parents provided a solid foundation for launching a statewide campaign. The Regional Adolescent Health Coordinators played a big role in the survey's success. Working with community partners, AHI found multiple ways to distribute the survey, including through [West Virginia's TAG Facebook page](#) and other social media outlets, at meetings of youth groups, and through other community-based organizations. In their survey responses, youth expressed frustration with adults not listening to them or not taking them seriously about bullying. "It would be nice if parents, adults and teachers would take bullying seriously," one respondent wrote. "It isn't a joke. We know the difference between friends kidding and actually being bullied. STOP treating us like we don't!"

Learn More

West Virginia Adolescent Health Initiative
<https://www.wvdhhr.org/ahi/>

