



Healthy Teen Network

**#StandingStrong & Keeping Youth at the Center**



A web version of this report with links to relevant sources is available  
at [www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org/annual-report/](http://www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org/annual-report/).

# About Healthy Teen Network

Founded in 1979, Healthy Teen Network fosters a national community where all adolescents and young adults, including youth who are pregnant or parenting, are supported and empowered to thrive. Located in Baltimore, Maryland, we serve as a leading national membership organization (501c3) for adolescent health professionals and organizations, promoting a unique and holistic perspective—we call it Youth 360°—to improve the health and well-being of young people.

## Vision

Healthy Teen Network envisions a world where all adolescents and young adults lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

## Mission

Healthy Teen Network promotes better outcomes for adolescents and young adults by advancing social change, cultivating innovation, and strengthening youth-supporting professionals and organizations.

## Our Guiding Principles

**Rights:** A more just and equitable world supports and empowers all adolescents and young adults—including young people who are pregnant or parenting—to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

**Individuality:** All adolescents and young adults, including young people who are pregnant and parenting, deserve respect, appreciation, and acceptance for their unique strengths, talents, and potential.

**Youth Centered:** Youth-centered strategies and approaches are critical to empower young people.

**Youth 360°:** How and where youth live, learn, and play matters...and needs to be addressed to achieve better outcomes.

**Evidence:** Evidence-based strategies and approaches are effective and efficient ways to achieve positive outcomes.

**Innovation:** Innovation is a critical component of a comprehensive strategy to respond to the dynamic lives of adolescents and young adults.

**Access:** All adolescents and young adults have a right to comprehensive, developmentally and culturally appropriate, confidential support and services, including contraceptive services, and if pregnant, to full options counseling and services.

# Reflections

## Letter from the Departing President & CEO

As I step down from my role as President and CEO of Healthy Teen Network, I find myself reflecting not only on our past fiscal year (and the topic of this annual report, of course), but also on the changes in the adolescent and sexual health fields I have seen over the past 20 years. Though it may seem at times as if we are sliding backwards, these reflections give me hope we are still moving forward, even if the pace has slowed for the moment.

**Pat Paluzzi, CNM, DrPH**  
*Departing President & CEO*



### 1 It's all about social justice.

I know that some individuals and agencies prefer to frame adolescent reproductive and sexual health concerns as public health or financial issues—and these are valid, however limited, frames. At the root of the issue is a lack of equity and respect for all youth in this country, which lends to the persistent high rates of disparities across diverse racial, ethnic, gender identity, and sexual orientation lines. We will never truly close these gaps without addressing this country's social inequities. This is a herculean task, but today's young people are more in tune with and willing to address issues of inequity. We need to encourage and support them and then get out of their way.

### 2 Environment matters—A LOT.

Framing teen pregnancy as solely a behavioral issue means that each young person is solely responsible for their pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes. And while there is some personal responsibility that must be considered, where youth live, learn and play has tremendous influence on the level of 'choice' and personal agency they experience. The World Health Organization recognized and promoted the concept of social determinants of health over 20 years ago, but here in the U.S., the concept is just now gaining traction. We are on the right track, but we must challenge ourselves even more to consider how we can best address the myriad of issues that intersect in young people's lives and impact their health and well-being.



### 3 Youth voice is key.

As proponents of using data to inform practice, we must truly engage youth in the development and design of messages, resources, and delivery mechanisms that resonate with their needs and their current patterns of information consumption. The advances in technology over the past 20 years are mind-boggling and the progression is only gaining speed. At Healthy Teen Network, we are engaging in digital focus groups, which has made it tremendously easier to engage and truly utilize youth voice. We are learning a lot from these focus groups, which is definitely shaping how we think about delivering sex ed to youth. And while I don't think we should give up on schools completely, I do believe we must spend equal effort developing and testing alternative forms for providing sex ed to youth. Our education system is broken, and sex ed will not be a priority for a long time to come, if ever.

### 4 Risk taking is essential.

We know that risk taking is normative in adolescence, and much of our work is to empower youth to take risks with fewer dire consequences. But risk taking should not end at 25. Much is learned from risk taking (think of researchers and what we gain from their trial and error approach to learning). Innovation is risk taking. Challenging the dominant paradigm is risk taking. Being the lone voice in a room that defends a social norm or defies an accepted 'truth' is risk taking. If we are going to work to address issues affecting adolescents, we must take risks.

I have worked in the field of reproductive health in some capacity since 1971. I have seen the introduction of the pill, the legalization of abortion, the implementation of the so called 'gag rule' internationally come and go depending on the party in the White House. I have witnessed big gains for minorities of all kinds, such as the end of miscegenation and segregation laws and homosexuality declassified as mental illness. All of these and many more changes came because people stood strong and demanded them. Getting that next contract because you don't speak out against those who incite hate is a short lived and cowardly approach to doing business and living life. Remembering why we do this work—to support and empower young people—should keep us on the right path.

I realize that nothing I have to offer is new, and much of it sounds incredibly idealistic—something you might not expect after so many years working in this field. But in spite of our current circumstances, I believe risk-taking, empowered people, young and old, can and will make a difference. Our work matters—A LOT! Take a moment to review some of our accomplishments from 2017 and how we are bringing our current strategic plan to life. I welcome Janet Max as Healthy Teen Network's Acting President and CEO, and I know that our organization will continue moving forward and #StandingStrong, no matter the political climate.

Peace,



**Pat Paluzzi, CNM, DrPH**  
*Departing President & CEO*

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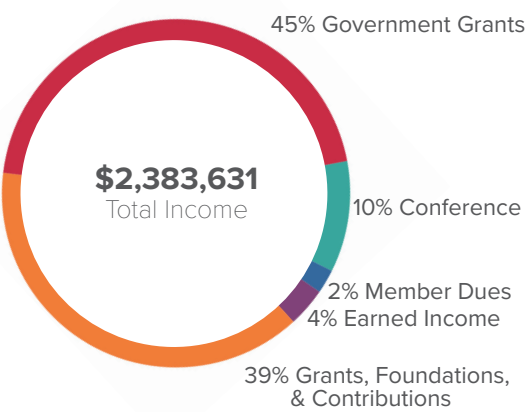
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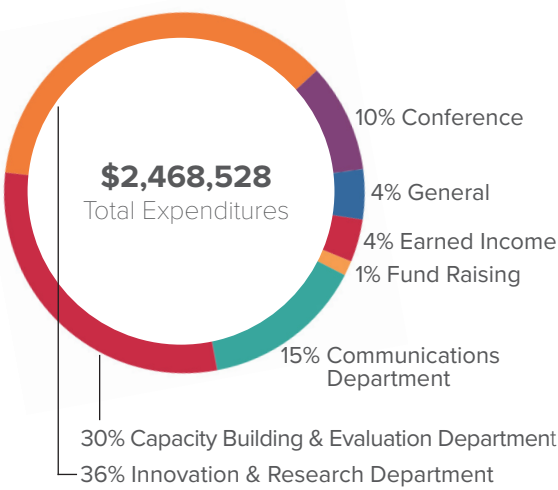
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# Fiscal Year 2017 Financial Data

Sources of Income



Expenditures by Area



## Thank You for #StandingStrong!

*To our supporters, funders, and donors, we thank you for your generous and continued ongoing support of Healthy Teen Network. Our important work with young people continues due to people like you.*

Anonymous  
Amira Adawe  
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Catherine Watson  
Norman Winarsky  
Carol Woolf



By 2020, Healthy Teen Network will work in all 50 states, US territories, and the District of Columbia to build the capacity of youth-supporting professionals to empower young people to thrive.



# 2017-2020 Strategic Plan

Healthy Teen Network believes that adolescent sexual and reproductive health is a social justice issue with public health impacts. These impacts are confounded by how and where youth live, learn, and play and require a holistic [Youth 360<sup>o</sup>](#) approach to achieve equity.

## Goal 1

Advance integration of a holistic approach to adolescent sexual & reproductive health programs & services.

- Healthy Teen Network will build the capacity of youth-supporting professionals and organizations to:
1. Adopt a holistic approach and integrate the social determinants of health into their work.
  2. Broaden their scope by building partnerships and collaborate beyond the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health.
  3. Ensure that they are inclusive of all young people, especially young families.

## Goal 2

Lead the use of innovation & evidence to support & empower young people to thrive.

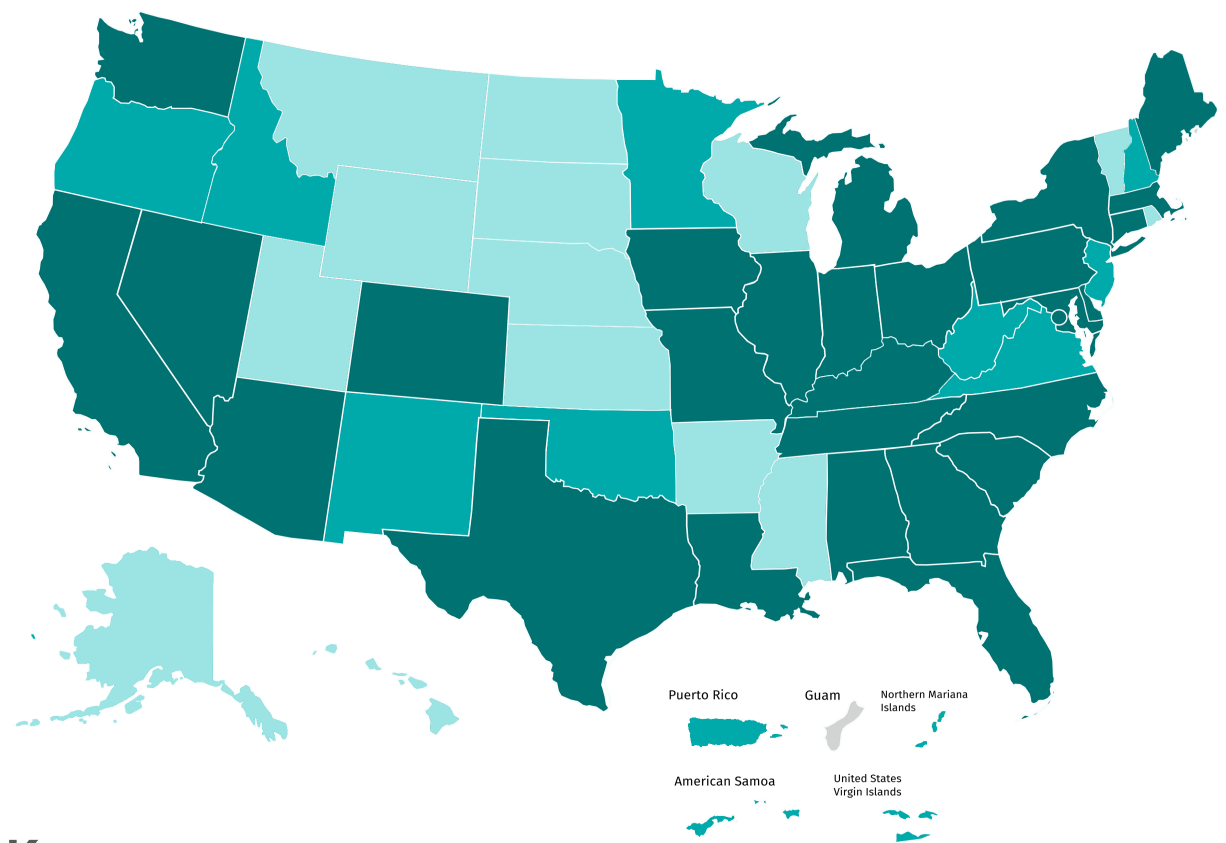
- Healthy Teen Network will:
1. Incorporate both innovation and evidence in our work.
  2. Develop solutions that are responsive to peoples’ needs using a human-centered approach.
  3. Build the capacity of youth-supporting professionals and organizations to incorporate innovation and evidence into their work.

## Goal 3

Promote & advance adolescent sexual & reproductive health as critical to the well-being of our nation.

- Healthy Teen Network will advocate to:
1. Maintain a spotlight on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.
  2. Promote understanding of the interplay of the environment and individuals on sexual and reproductive health outcomes.
  3. Build the capacity of youth-supporting professionals and organizations to use effective messages and delivery strategies to mobilize diverse audiences to promote adolescent health.

# Map of Capacity-Building Assistance Provided



## Key

High Intensity	Medium Intensity	Low Intensity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training</li><li>• Elearning</li><li>• Conference</li><li>• Technical Assistance (in person, phone, email)</li><li>• Partnership</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Membership</li><li>• Communications</li><li>• Webinar</li><li>• Presentation</li><li>• Cluster calls</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spotlight</li><li>• Blog Posts</li><li>• Policy Updates</li></ul>

# Sharing Our Progress

We are tracking our capacity-building assistance across the nation and categorizing the level of assistance as high, moderate, or low, based on the type of activity(ies) received or attended.

We are committed to standing behind our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan and our promise to our members and funders to report back on our progress each year. This annual report includes highlights of our progress in the 2017 fiscal year (September 2016 – October 2017).

# Goal 1

Advance integration  
of a holistic approach  
to adolescent sexual  
& reproductive health  
programs & services.



# Increasing Our Reach & Integration of Social Determinants of Health



**How and where we live, learn, and play matters.**

We cannot expect to significantly impact health outcomes and address health disparities without considering the critical factors, or social

determinants of health, that shape our well-being.

Healthy Teen Network developed [Youth 360°](#) to make it easier to talk about and understand the intersection of the social determinants of health and social-ecological theory, and how each of us is affected by factors at an individual level, but also through our relationships and communities, and in society as a whole. Youth 360° is more than just a messaging tool; it is a way to approach systems-based change to respond to the dynamic lives of young people.

We must address a wide range of factors—such as access to quality education and health services, socioeconomic status, or having life goals and aspirations—that can influence health outcomes and disparities. Youth 360° is a commitment to reach all young people, including marginalized youth populations, such as youth in out-of-home-care, system-involved youth, runaway/homeless youth, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth who are pregnant or parenting.

Each year, we ask our members to report their familiarity with and integration of the Youth 360°. Over time, we've found that we have indeed been successful in reaching our first strategic plan goal

to adopt this holistic approach and integrate the social determinants of health into their work. They are working to broaden their scope by building partnerships and collaborate beyond the field of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and ensuring that they are inclusive of all young people, especially young families.

Thirty-seven percent of our members are very familiar, and 44% are somewhat familiar with a holistic health promotion approach to integrate the social determinants of health. Fifty-one percent of our members reported that their organizations are integrating social determinants in their work.

We've been able to increase our reach and promote integration of a holistic approach to adolescent sexual and reproductive health through our varied level of capacity-building assistance (see map, Figure 1). Each year, we assess our members, and they have shared with us that our capacity building has enabled them to:

- Conduct their own trainings,
- Select effective curricula,
- Build their organizational capacity,
- Sustain evidence-based programs,
- Build teacher competencies to deliver sex ed,
- Implement curricula with fidelity,
- Build student satisfaction with curricula,
- Create and modify training designs,
- Develop capacity-building strategies,
- Set and meet goals,
- Create public service announcements,
- Work with stakeholders, and
- Gain insights.

# Partners in Preparing Professionals to Address Human Trafficking

In our commitment to advance a holistic approach to adolescent sexual and reproductive health, we have been working to expand the scope of our projects and form new partnerships. In 2017, Healthy Teen Network partnered with the University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMBSSW) as a subcontractor under a Department of Justice Office of Victims Services grant. Together, we are working to increase and improve the level of professional development Maryland service providers receive so that they may better meet the needs of child sex and labor trafficking victims.

We also did an environmental scan of existing trainings available to Maryland service providers on child trafficking, to help increase access to these resources. Over the course of this project, we will continue to deliver a variety of training and resources to meet the needs of professionals working to better address human trafficking in Maryland. Through this project, we've also been able to increase our own internal capacity to address this broader area of adolescent sexual and reproductive health.





# Generate My Healthy Future

## A Resource for Whole Health Planning

The [Generate My Healthy Future Plan](#) guides adolescents and young adults to think about if they want to learn more about or make a change in their health, then make a plan to take charge of their health. Depending on their readiness, youth can walk through a “choose your own adventure” style guide covering 20 health topics—to follow the next step, for further reflection, finding more information, or setting a goal and taking action. The activity can be completed individually or with a caring adult, at home or in a group setting.

In 2017, we piloted the *Generate My Healthy Future Plan* with 150 youth and 75 adults recruited from across the U.S.

[Findings](#), based on a 2017 post-test questionnaire, show that the Plan promotes health intentions, builds adult confidence to guide young people, is easy to use, and is highly recommended:

### Promotes Health Intentions

- 98.6% of youth participants reported that the activity either helped them or maybe helped them take charge of their health. 81.7% of youth planned to take at least one action after completing the activity.

### Builds Adult Confidence to Guide

- 100% of adults felt the activity and resources either helped them or maybe helped them feel better equipped to help a young person take charge of their health.

### Easy to Use

- 88.7% of youth and 94% of adults found the activity either very easy or mostly easy.

### Highly Recommended

- 98.6% of youth and 90.5% of adults reported they either would or would maybe recommend the activity.

The best validation of *Generate My Healthy Future Plan* is that nearly 100 percent of youth and adult participants indicated that they would definitely or maybe recommend the activity to others. This high praise builds our confidence that *Generate My Healthy Future Plan* is a welcome addition to the national inventory of holistic adolescent and young adult health promotion resources.

# Goal 2

Lead the use of  
evidence & innovation  
to support & empower  
young people to thrive.



# Engaging Youth in Data Collection & Learning

## Digital Focus Groups & Social Media Recruitment

In 2017, we continued the development and testing of two digital health tools: [Crush](http://www.mycrush.org) and Pulse. These tools share sexual health information with adolescent women—anywhere, anytime. Crush is designed primarily for Black and Latinx young women ages 14-18 and is available (as of May 2018) in English ([www.mycrush.org](http://www.mycrush.org)) and Spanish ([www.micrush.org](http://www.micrush.org)). Pulse, adapted from Crush, is designed primarily for young women ages 18-22 and will be available in 2019.

These innovative digital tools empower adolescent women by sharing on-demand access to comprehensive, medically accurate sexual health information. They use interactive, multimedia features to enhance engagement and support diverse learning styles. Crush offers sex-positive, culturally and age appropriate text, animation, video, quizzes, interactive graphics, and calendar and clinic locator tools to educate users about birth control, healthy relationships, sexual health and anatomy, pregnancy, and clinical services.

We engaged youth every step of the way in developing Crush and Pulse, using digital focus

groups. We recruited young people to serve as focus group participants on social media. We then posed questions and provided different parts of the digital tools for their review, all through private Facebook groups. Youth were able to view and respond to these questions and samples, providing feedback, suggestions, and guidance, which we used to develop and improve Crush and Pulse.

Once developed, we needed to recruit youth to test Crush and Pulse, and again, we relied on social media. Through a series of ads on Facebook and Instagram, we successfully recruited enough youth across the country to satisfy our research requirements and test Crush and Pulse.

We've gone on to share our learning from digital focus groups and social media recruitment with our members. Through poster sessions, presentations, webinars, and individualized technical assistance, we've helped our members increase their capacity to use these innovative techniques to improve their own resources and services.



# Collaborating with School & Community Partners to Improve Sex Ed

Throughout various projects, we are working to engage communities and schools as partners to improve sex ed. For example, since 2009, we have been partners with Baltimore City to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health outcomes. From a strategic plan which we led development of in 2009, Baltimore City, as one of the B'more for Healthy Babies priority programs, launched [U Choose](#), funded in part by the federal Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program.

Healthy Teen Network has been a critical partner of this initiative since its inception, and we continue to provide the necessary capacity-building assistance to ensure young people in Baltimore have access to sexual health education care and clinical services. In 2017, we delivered 6 customized trainings to facilitators, educators, and clinic staff. The project reached 10,317 youth in three settings: middle schools, high schools, and clinics, exceeding the annual goal of 10,000 youth.

In another project, since 2011, Healthy Teen Network has served as a national grantee for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health (CDC-DASH), providing capacity-building assistance to local education agencies to increase the use of exemplary sexual health education to improve the

health and well-being of young people.

This project has focused on the content of programs or curricula, but it has an equal emphasis on the way that the content is delivered. We know that in order for sex ed to be most successful, the content must be delivered by well-qualified and well-trained instructors who know how to use effective instructional methods to deliver the program the way it's intended to be delivered.

In 2017, we trained staff in 17 school districts to develop professional development plans for sexual health instructors. Three school districts, based on our intensive customized support conducted a total overhaul of their professional development plans to align with best practices. As a result of our support, these schools are better prepared not only to deliver the curriculum content but deliver it in the most effective way.

Through these projects across the country, we are continuing to increase our reach while supporting the use of evidence and innovation. And we're making sure that the resources we create from these projects can then be made accessible, through our Center for Evidence and Innovation, to even more of our members, beyond initial grantees.

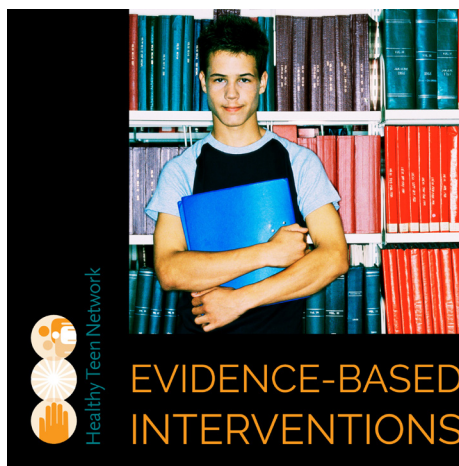


## Increasing Our Reach through Distance Learning

In 2017, we launched the [Center for Evidence and Innovation](#) to fill the vacuum left in the absence of public funding, providing necessary trainings and resources to ensure our nation's young people continue to receive quality sex education and access to services and are empowered to lead healthy sexual and reproductive lives.

At a time when resources and time to access professional development grow increasingly scarce, the Center provides easily accessible distance learning for the field to continue to support efforts to use evidence and innovation. Thanks to our [#StandingStrong supporters](#), many of our newest Center elearning resources are available at no cost to the field at large. These online resources provide on-demand training to professionals without the need to travel or take long hours away from work.

[New Center resources](#) include elearning on a variety of topics, such as classroom management, meeting the needs of LGBTQ+ youth, privacy and confidentiality, building support among stakeholders, evidence-based interventions and adaptation, and more!



# Goal 3

Promote & advance  
adolescent sexual &  
reproductive health  
as critical to the well-  
being of our nation.





# Keeping Youth at the Center

## Assessing & Improving Our Organizational Practices

Central to our advocacy efforts and keeping youth at the center is also the ability to objectively reflect on our own practices and continue to improve organizational policies and procedures. In 2017, we engaged in a yearlong board and staff assessment activity focused on our own authentic youth engagement practices.

**Youth engagement is the concept and practice of meaningfully engaging youth in decisions that affect their lives, their peers, and their communities.**

This approach recognizes that youth are not merely passive recipients of services, but rather, actively engaged participants who are involved in

the issues that impact them.

As a result of this internal assessment, we identified key areas where we could improve some of our practices and policies. We instituted a volunteer policy to encourage staff to engage with youth as a means of contributing to their community, developing youth-adult relationships, and making their work as relevant to young people as possible. To promote these outcomes, our staff may volunteer to participate in youth-oriented activities during or after typical work hours. The committee also identified best practices and next steps to engage youth in our day-to-day mission-driven work, and we're continuing to work to improve our organizational practices and keep youth at the center.

# Maintaining a Spotlight

## Partnerships, Advocacy, & Education

In 2017, we saw many setbacks for adolescent sexual and reproductive health, particularly at the federal level. However, these attacks on the rights of all young people have only served to help our field be more collaborative and more determined than ever in #StandingStrong and keeping youth at the center in all that we do.

We've been actively engaged with other national agencies focused on adolescent sexual and reproductive health to remain vigilant and effective in our advocacy to protect evidence-based, medically accurate, inclusive programs and services for all young people. For example, we partnered in forming a sex ed collaborative in 2017, as one of 17 national, regional, and state-based organizations with extensive experience training educators to deliver school-based sex education.

For our members, we consistently provided timely policy alerts and updates, in what would be a tumultuous year of many new, and often controversial, cabinet appointments, funding announcements, budget proposals, and legislative initiatives. Our updates ensured our members received accurate information relevant to their advocacy efforts for adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

Our position statements address relevant issues for young people, both to formalize our stances,

as well as to serve as a resource to support our members' advocacy efforts. In 2017, we developed nine new position statements:

- Ensuring Equity for Youth by Dismantling Racism
- Title X Family Planning Program
- Ensuring Equity for Youth by Applying Gender Transformative Approaches
- Universal Right to Health Care
- Sexual and Reproductive Health Services for Immigrant Youth
- Ensuring Equity by Affirming Those Who Are LGBTQ+ or Gender Non-Conforming
- Sexual & Reproductive Health Services for System-Involved Youth
- Health Promotion & the Social Determinants of Health
- Educational Equity for Young People Who Are Pregnant or Parenting

Despite a difficult year for federal support for adolescent sexual and reproductive health, these partnerships and collaborative advocacy efforts exemplify the commitment our field has for maintaining a spotlight on adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

## #StandingStrong

In 2017, the federal government [unlawfully ended the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program \(TPPP\)](#) grant agreements, cutting \$213.6 million in funding, affecting over 1.2 million young people who benefited from the program and the more than 81 organizations and agencies providing these programs. Healthy Teen Network was one of these grantees, and in response, [we took a stand](#).

Our actions included filing a lawsuit (represented by the Democracy Forward Foundation) challenging the Trump-Pence administration for unlawfully ending the TPPP grant agreements. The lawsuits asked that the funding for the program be reinstated to our nation's young people. Ultimately, in 2018, we, along with our fellow plaintiffs, would be victorious, with the court ruling that the action by HHS was arbitrary, capricious, and contrary to law.

"For the third time in a week, a court ruled that the Trump Administration cannot break the law to put ideology ahead of effective, evidence-based policymaking," said Healthy Teen Network President Dr. Patricia Paluzzi.

"We are proud to have succeeded in blocking this unlawful action by the Department of Health and Human Services and we will remain vigilant to ensure that HHS follows the law," said Anne Harkavy, Executive Director of Democracy Forward Foundation.

"This ruling is a victory for the youth of Baltimore City. It means that 20,000 students in our city will continue to receive evidence-based education, giving our young people the chance for improved health, educational attainment and economic opportunities," said Dr. Leana Wen, Baltimore City Health Commissioner. "By following science and evidence, Baltimore has made significant progress in reducing teen birth rates, and we look forward to continuing to fulfill our responsibility of protecting the health and ensuring the well-being of our youth."

We remain steady in our resolve, #StandingStrong, so our young people can continue to be supported and empowered to thrive.

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