

2018-2019 Youth Advisory Council Yearend Report

Purpose

The Youth Advisory Council (YAC) will provide input and feedback on nutrition resources, messages and approaches that target youth ages 15-19 years, and are aimed at improving their nutritional knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.

Goal

Alberta Health Services (AHS) School Nutrition Working Group (SNWG) understands and addresses the nutrition-related topics that are of personal importance to youth in Alberta.

Activities and Discussions

Meeting date	Activities	Discussions
October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of 2017-2018 YAC activities. • Reviewed member expectations and ground rules. • Discussed the role of a Registered Dietitian. 	
November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalized ground rules. • Reviewed Municipalities Protect and Promote Children and Youth's Health By Supporting Healthy Food Environments Infographic. • Introduced Fueling for Sports Nutrition Infographic Posters. • Finalized 2018-2019 YAC action plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on Municipalities Protect and Promote Children and Youth's Health By Supporting Healthy Food Environments Infographic is summarized in this report.
December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed feedback on Fueling for Sports Nutrition Infographic Posters and suggested changes. • Consultation on effectiveness of current wellness messaging in schools and suggestions for better methods. • Introduced School Nutrition Announcements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on Fueling for Sports Infographic Posters are summarized in this report. • Main findings from consultation on effectiveness of current wellness messaging in schools and suggestions for better methods are captured in Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Summary Report.
January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No meeting held this month due to exams. 	
February 04, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed feedback on School Nutrition Announcements and suggested changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on School Nutrition Announcements are summarized in this report. • Members became aware of YAC by one of the following routes:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided piktochart tutorial. • Discussed recruitment process and avenues for 2019-2020. • Introduced Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A teacher who was aware of the program contacting the student directly ○ A family member in AHS aware of the program ○ Family friend who was aware of the program
February 25, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each member shared their plan for Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project and the group provided feedback. • Discussed methods of collecting feedback and specific survey questions to measure success of project. 	
March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed updates and progress on Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project. • Introduced yearend report infographic. • Introduced the group yearend report. • Introduced Tell Your Own Story. 	
April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members shared their progress and results on Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project. 	
May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members shared their results on Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project. • Discussed recommendations for improvement of YAC. • Confirmed membership for 2019-2020 YAC. • Thanked all members for participating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results of the Healthy Messages for Youth Pilot Project is summarized in this report. • Suggestions for future YAC assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Doing a school presentation on healthy messages instead of posters. ○ Incorporating a graded assignment at the end of the term. ○ A greater focus on projects, doing projects with a partner, and being able to compare project results between schools. ○ An independent project under the general umbrella of “health.”

Outcomes

Process

Ten high school students from four AHS zones (North, Edmonton, Calgary, and South) participated in the YAC for 2018/19. One student was in grade 10, two students were in grade 11, and seven students were in grade 12. Meetings were held monthly and online from October 2018 to May 2019. A total of eight, 1.5 hour meetings were held with an average attendance of 8 members at each meeting.

This year due to applications exceeding our limit of 10 members for YAC a new group, Members At Large (MAL) was created in an effort to gain wider input from youth. The MAL consisted of 3 grade 10 students and one grade 12 student to share their views electronically rather than in the meetings.

Member knowledge and skills

Evaluation from members indicated that they gained new perspectives and knowledge about nutritional issues affecting youth and what is currently in place to promote nutrition, including resources. They also indicated that they gained skills in data collection, public speaking, and leadership.

- “Serving on this council for the past two years has introduced me to new perspectives regarding nutritional issues on a macroscopic level, such as Alberta or Canada as a whole, and also at a microscopic level, in my own school.”
- “I became more comfortable with public speaking, presenting data I collected individually, and taking detailed meeting minutes.”
- “Being part of this committee has allowed me to gain further knowledge on topics that are important to me, specifically nutrition and healthy living.”
- “My eyes were opened to the pressures of trying to get youth involved in caring about nutrition.”
- “Overall, I believe that the Youth Advisory Council gives students the necessary tools and opportunity to bridge theory and practice in their own high schools.”
- “I would definitely recommend YAC to anyone who is wanting to learn techniques on how to stay healthy and save money, as well as learn leadership skills.”
- “YAC gave me more awareness on healthy eating and the lack of attention to the topic of eating choices at school.”

Member wellbeing, confidence and sense of self-worth

Feedback from committee members indicated that it was a positive and worthwhile experience where they felt heard and valued, which increased their passion and interest in nutrition as they felt they were able to make a difference.

- “I had a delightful experience working with the council and to see how we advanced

through the year, to overcome our challenges, and to work collaboratively to spread positive messages.”

- “Overall, I felt that the experience gained from the Youth Advisory Council was gratifying and unique in the sense that I will be unable to receive such unfiltered, youth-targeted and unbiased information regarding the topic anywhere else.”
- “It was especially rewarding to know that I had a voice in helping people my age receive the knowledge they deserve concerning proper nutrition.”
- “I loved the people and ideas that were shared, and it was great to feel like a part of a good cause that has the potential to change students’ lives.”
- “In the future, I plan to explore the field of health sciences, and the YAC has provided me with information to do that.”
- “It was a fun experience that made me more aware of my own eating habits and to be more healthy.”
- “I would highly encourage other individuals to join the Youth Advisory Council as it allowed me to bring awareness to nutrition and let me grow as a 21st century learner.

Impact for Nutrition Services

The YAC provides an ongoing forum for the SNWG to learn from Alberta youth about topics that are important to them. Through consultation with committee members and their efforts to engage their peers, we have identified preferred communication channels and formats that can be used with youth in school settings. In addition, the YAC continues to provide feedback on nutrition products developed by Nutrition Services to ensure we provide messages, tools and resources that are relevant to this population.

Successes

With the third year of the YAC (end in May 2019) and the fourth year (2019/20) underway, the YAC has exemplified the following:

- Strong member engagement and participation
- Effective recruitment with ten committee members and four ‘members at large’
- Leadership skills in actively spearheading campaigns to bring awareness to healthy eating in their schools
- Ability to work collaboratively with different parties to achieve their goals and elicit feedback
- Creativity, resiliency, and problem-solving skills when encountering challenges
- Continued interest in health, healthy eating, and promoting this among their peers

Points to consider

Recommendations from members

- Use “Remind” more often between meetings to send reminders about completing tasks/projects. This will encourage everyone to finish assigned tasks on time.
- Consider tackling a specific nutrition topic for projects such as snacking, physical activity, eating breakfast, drinks etc.
- Start creating healthy eating awareness campaigns earlier in the year. This would allow for more time to brainstorm an idea, develop a way to portray it, and research additional information.
- Create a YAC social media account that can be used by all council members for posting health and nutrition-related topics.
- Provide more information regarding healthy eating directly from the dietitians themselves.
- Share one master file folder at the beginning of the year with all relevant documents included, such as meeting minutes.

Recommendations from the planning team

Continue to:

- Strive towards broad and diverse gender, geography, community size and indigenous youth representation from all AHS zones.
- Use online meetings to minimize technical difficulties for the youth.
- Explore ways to encourage equal input from all members.
- Encourage members to attend all meetings. The 2018-19 attendance average for the meeting was 8/10 members.
- Develop a comprehensive outline of year’s activities including potential projects, resources to review, etc. Use student recommendations to inform activities for 2019-20 school year and identify activities and timelines to allow completion.
- Plan activities and meetings as far in advance as possible with youth input to avoid meeting conflicts.

Recommended next steps

- Discontinue ‘members at large’ as per poor engagement and attendance.
- Continue to expand our recruitment activities for Alberta-wide representation, including Indigenous youth. Provide formal communication in the beginning of the year stating that recommendation letters will be sent upon completion of all tasks and only when member expectations are met.
- Provide clear direction to YAC members on expectation of tasks or projects. Limit the scope so that it is smaller, manageable, and more defined for members. Start YAC meetings in September to allow for 4 meetings before the holiday season with potential to hold 2 meetings in February.
- Encourage verbal discussion by planning more ice breaker activities, setting parameters for use of the written message function, asking each member for comments, etc.