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PATCH Program Receives Funding to Launch New Youth Advocacy Fellowship *Program to Focus on Social and Emotional Health for Teens*

MADISON – For over a decade, the [Providers and Teens Communicating for Health \(PATCH®\) Program](#) has worked to improve adolescent health in Wisconsin alongside and in true partnership with youth. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PATCH witnessed tremendous social and emotional health (SEH) impacts on youth and saw unprecedented challenges surface. Thus, with newly awarded funding from the [Wisconsin Partnership Program \(WPP\)](#) at the University of Wisconsin School of medicine and Public Health through its COVID-19 Response Grant Program, PATCH will launch a new Youth Advocacy Fellowship focused specifically on SEH for teens.

“We know social, emotional, and mental health is a major concern for Wisconsin teens. In fact, of the thirty youth we interviewed last year, every single one named this area of health as the number one concern among their peers,” said PATCH Program Founder and Director, Amy Olejniczak. “We are so grateful for WPP’s investment in Wisconsin’s youth.”

Based on the successful [PATCH Youth Advocacy Fellowship](#) model, PATCH will hire, train, support, and pay a diverse statewide group of young people, ages 12-21, to engage directly in Wisconsin’s COVID-19 SEH response efforts. PATCH will offer a space to listen to youth stories, value youth experiences, and empower youth to be advocates for themselves, their peers, and their generation.

“PATCH is an incredible organization – it encourages teens to use their voices and actions to change the world. I’ve received a massive amount of love and support from everyone I’ve interacted with. My bosses, my coworkers, and even the guest speakers and educators have taken the time to check up on me and support me,” said a 17-year-old PATCH Youth Advocate.

“One of the first things we learned about was advocating for ourselves. It was exactly what I needed to hear. I was in such a deep depression and close to ending my life. PATCH 100% is the reason I’m here today. They gave me the power to speak up for myself,” said an 18-year-old PATCH Teen Educator.

PATCH strongly believes that youth voices are an essential part of informing the policies we develop, the systems we cultivate, the environments we foster, and the investments we make. As a statewide leader in youth empowerment, PATCH is committed to exploring, supporting, and destigmatizing SEH with youth and working alongside them to discover solutions.

“When I joined PATCH, I was going through a rough time, to say the least. I had come out as transgender about a year before and was struggling to find the support I needed at home. I dreaded school and my grades were sinking. PATCH revolutionized how I thought of myself and my purpose in the world. I often wonder where I’d be today without it,” said one PATCH Alumni who now attends medical school.

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PATCH is a Program of the Wisconsin Alliance for Women’s Health (WAWH). To learn more about PATCH in Wisconsin, visit www.wipatch.org. To learn more about WAWH, visit www.supportwomenshealth.org.