

PRESS TOOLKIT

TEEN HEALTH MISSISSIPPI

FOLLOW OUR WORK AT TEENHEALTHMS.ORG.

Visit us at 125 S. Congress Street, Suite 1224, Jackson, MS 39201.
Visit our website teenhealthms.org for more information about our work.

TEEN HEALTH
MISSISSIPPI



TEEN HEALTH MISSISSIPPI

WE BELIEVE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE DESERVE
ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY SEX EDUCATION AND
YOUTH-FRIENDLY HEALTHCARE.

TEEN HEALTH MISSISSIPPI



ABOUT THMS

All young people should have access to high-quality sex education and youth-friendly healthcare services. We work to engage youth advocates and communities to increase awareness of important policies relating to teen sexual health. We provide training and resources to develop the capacity of youth-serving adults and organizations to effectively implement research-based strategies, programs, and services that are guided by key positive youth development practices.

OUR WORK

Teen Health Mississippi's (THMS) work is conducted in partnership with youth and falls within three primary domains:

POLICY & ADVOCACY

We engage youth advocates and community stakeholders to increase awareness of important policies relating to youth sexual health and champion such policies at state, local, and organizational levels.



TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

We provide training and resources to build the capacity of youth-serving adults and organizations to effectively implement strategies, programs, and services that are guided by research and key positive youth development practices.

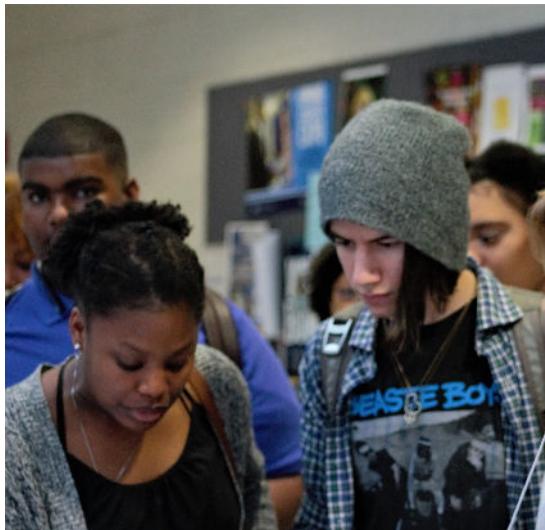


PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

We support the implementation of programs and strategies that are informed by research and best practices that target risk and protective factors that influence youth and teen sexual health.

TEEN HEALTH MISSISSIPPI

OUR TEAM



Hope Crenshaw

Executive Director

Contact Hope for any general media inquiries or any general quotes related to THMS work.

Josh McCawley

Deputy Director

Contact Josh to learn more about CHART, comprehensive sex education advocacy, and teen health policy.

Monica Coleman

Director of Education & Training

Contact Monica for any inquiring dealing with professional development and capacity building around sex education and youth-friendly healthcare.

Justin Lofton

Youth Engagement Coordinator

Contact Justin to learn more about youth engagement at Teen Health Mississippi. He is responsible for MYCouncil and MYSummit.

Whitney French

Focus4Teen Project Coordinator

Whitney manages the CDC Focus4Teens project based in Clarksdale, MS.

Anupria Davenport

Pregnancy Assistance Fund Coordinator

Anupria is responsible for the Pregnancy Assistance Fund.



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@MYCouncil
@MS.TeamME



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WHAT MAKES TEEN HEALTH MISSISSIPPI UNIQUE

We are an organization dedicated to partnering with young people to ensure access to research-based sex education and making healthcare youth-friendly in Mississippi. We know if we successfully serve and partner with youth, **everyone benefits**. Youth serve on our board of directors, drive our programming, and act as advisers when developing new training and resources.

THMS PROGRAMS

OUR WORK IS DEDICATED TO PROVIDING ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY SEX EDUCATION AND YOUTH-FRIENDLY HEALTHCARE TO MISSISSIPPI YOUTH.

Focused Pregnancy Prevention for Mississippi Teens (Focus4Teens) is dedicated to improving the lives of youth and reducing unintended teen pregnancy in the Mississippi Delta. Focus4Teens works to expand access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive healthcare among youth at high risk for pregnancy. **Point-of-Contact: Whitney French**

Mississippi Youth Council (MYCouncil)

MYCouncil is made up of passionate youth activists from across Mississippi that support and promote high-quality comprehensive sex education for all young people. **Point-of-Contact: Justin Lofton**

Creating Healthy & Responsible Teens (CHART)

CHART, in partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health, works to increase the number of districts offering high-quality "abstinence-plus" sex education policies and programs in Mississippi public schools. **Point-of-Contact: Josh McCawley**

Mind Elevation. (Project ME.)

Project ME. is a social media awareness campaign that connects Mississippi youth to high-quality and youth-friendly mental and sexual-reproductive health resources. **Point-of-Contact: Hope Crenshaw**

K-5 Human Growth & Development provides different human growth and development curriculum options and technical assistance for Mississippi school districts. **Point-of-Contact: Josh McCawley**

THMS provides **Healthcare Training & Technical Assistance** to build the capacity of youth-serving healthcare providers to effectively implement research-based strategies, programs, and youth-friendly healthcare services that are guided by key positive youth development practices. **Point-of-Contact: Monica Coleman**

LinkedUP is a research-based teen pregnancy prevention program focused on linking older teens (ages 17-19 years) to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services as they transition from high school to college, or whatever their next step after high school may be. **Point-of-Contact: Josh McCawley**

Legislative & Education Advocacy Collaborative (LEAC)

LEAC bridges the gap between state policy-makers and Mississippi youth through a collaborative that provides policy-makers with the knowledge and tools to advocate for high-quality sex education for Mississippi youth.

Point-of-Contact: Justin Lofton

Pregnancy Assistance Fund (PAF)

PAF creates trainings for professionals that are working with pregnant and parenting teens. PAF is also working to create a comprehensive resource guide linking youth to high quality resources in their area. **Point-of-Contact: Anupria Davenport**

Mississippi Youth Voice (MYVoice)

MYVoice is a peer-to-peer education program designed to share information and resources about sexual health. This work is focused in Coahoma County. **Point-of-Contact: Josh McCawley**

Mississippi Sex Ed Training Cadre facilitates trainings and professional development events for Teen Health Mississippi across the state. Members of the sex education training cadre deliver in-person and web-based training and professional development to youth-serving professionals who work in a variety of different settings. **Point-of-Contact: Monica Coleman**

THMS History

The Beginning

Mississippi First launched Creating Healthy and Responsible Teens (CHART) in partnership with Mississippi State Department of Health. This was the beginning of our work in teen health.



Expanding the Team

Mississippi Youth Council (MYCouncil) was founded, and our first full-time employee was hired to focus on teen health.



Five Strong

Mississippi First officially formed Teen Health Mississippi (THMS) and expanded the team to 5 full-time staff.

**YEAR
2010**



**YEAR
2013**

Joining WISE

In 2013, Mississippi was named a WISE (Working to Institutionalize Sex Education) state.



New Funding

Our teen health work continues to expand and we hired another full-time staff member. We received a CDC grant and launched Focused Pregnancy Prevention for Mississippi Teens (Focus4Teens).

**YEAR
2014**

**YEAR
2015**

**YEAR
2016**



THMS History, continued.

Spinning-Off

THMS began the spin-off process from Mississippi First in order to become a stand-alone nonprofit. THMS also launched the Sex Education Training Cadre.

YEAR
2017



YEAR
2018

Engaging Youth

We received new funding to expand youth engagement work. These projects included LinkedUp, MYVoice, and Project ME., and the Mississippi Youth Summit.

Independence

As of January 1, 2019, THMS is a standalone 501c3.

YEAR
2019



Today

Focus on Youth

We are an organization dedicated to ensuring access to research-based sex education and making healthcare youth-friendly in Mississippi. We know if we successfully serve and partner with youth, **everyone benefits**. Youth serve on our board of directors, drive our programming, and act as advisers when developing new training and resources.

THMS STORY: OUR FOUNDING

Mississippi has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates and sexually transmitted infection rates in the county.

Prior to 2011, there was no state policy requiring sex education to be taught in schools.

This all changed in 2011 when the Mississippi Sex Education Law passed (Miss. Code Ann. Section 37-13-171). Public school districts were now required to teach sex education. However, the law left it up to the district to decide what type of sex education policy they would adopt — either abstinence-only or abstinence-plus. Students that complete abstinence-only programs are as likely as their peers to engage in sexual activity before marriage and are less likely to use contraceptives when they do become sexually active. Conversely, abstinence-plus sex education programs can delay sexual initiation and reduce risky sexual behaviors, such as engaging in sex with multiple partners and having unprotected sex.

To decrease our teen pregnancy and STI rates, school districts needed to adopt evidence-based abstinence-plus sex education.

The passing of the law led to Mississippi First, in partnership with the Mississippi State Department of Health, establishing Creating Healthy and Responsible Teens (CHART), a project that promotes abstinence-plus sex education. The sex ed work under Mississippi First's umbrella expanding in 2015 with new funding to increase access to youth-friendly healthcare resources and trainings. In 2017, Teen Health Mississippi was named as the program dedicated to sex education, youth-friendly healthcare, and teen health policy within Mississippi First. It became clear not too soon later that THMS needed to be its own organization, a nonprofit dedicated to high-quality sex education and increasing access to youth-friendly healthcare.

Today, we operate independently and work closely with youth partners to increase access to youth-friendly healthcare and high-quality sex education through policy & advocacy, training & capacity, and strategic programs & campaigns.



PRESS RELEASE

FOCUS4TEENS INCREASES ACCESS FOR YOUTH

JACKSON, MS—Teen Health Mississippi, also known as THMS, is reducing teen pregnancy rates and STI rates in Mississippi communities. Teen Health Mississippi became a new nonprofit in January 2019, but they have been working on increasing access to high-quality education and youth-friendly healthcare since 2011.

Increasing Access to Full Range of Birth Control Options

Teen Health Mississippi, through their program Focus4Teens, has been working with Title X clinics in the Mississippi Delta to offer a full range of birth control options, including long-acting reversible contraception (LARCs). To date, Aaron E. Henry Community Health Services Center (CHC) or Title X partners, can now insert LARCs as well as provide other options of contraception to their clients. The clinics have seen a rise in LARC insertion among teens since Focus4Teens has been providing training and support to Aaron E. Henry CHC in Coahoma, Tunica, and Quitman County. Focus4Teens has developed trainings to educate clinics on how to code and bill for different birth control options, including LARCs, and informing them of minor's rights in Mississippi, and how to make clinics more youth-friendly.

Making Clinics Youth-Friendly

After a few years of working in sex education, it became clear to Teen Health Mississippi that many youth across the state did not feel comfortable attending their local health centers. Focus4Teens works directly with youth in order to inform providers how they can make their health centers more youth-friendly. This includes providing time and space for teens to have their questions answered by a provider, convenience of location, having school-based clinics, and making sure there is a full range of options being provided.

Commitment to Building Relationships to Impact Change

"When we work in communities, we know that change moves at the speed of trust. We work closely with our partners to develop meaningful relationships with providers and youth in order to make sure our healthcare system is best serving teens. Because at the end of the day, we know that if we are serving our youth successfully, the quality of care will increase for all," said Dr. Hope Crenshaw, executive director of Teen Health Mississippi.

The success of the Focus4Teens program and Teen Health Mississippi is directly related to their commitment to building relationships. Focus4Teens works with a group of youth advisers to help develop trainings and problem-solve ways providers can make the healthcare experience more youth-friendly.

"Since we started this work, in 2011, we have increased access to medically-accurate sex education in our most vulnerable school districts, increased access to a variety of birth control options in communities with an uptick in teen pregnancy and STI rates, empowered youth to be vocal about their rights around healthcare, and established meaningful partnerships with communities. Our partners have been successful in enacting changes around sexual and reproductive health for teens," said Crenshaw.

If you are interested in learning more about the work of Teen Health Mississippi or Focus4Teens, contact Hope Crenshaw at hope@teenhealthms.org or visit teenhealthms.org.

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Teen Health Mississippi is a nonprofit that envisions a Mississippi built on a foundation of healthy communities in which all young people have access to high-quality sex education and youth-friendly healthcare services. Teen Health Mississippi's work is in partnership with youth and falls within three primary domains: policy and advocacy, training and capacity building, and programs and initiatives.

OP ED

TEEN HEALTH MISSISSIPPI, A YOUTH-FOCUSED ORG

Let's acknowledge the elephant in the room. The topic of teens and sex has largely been considered taboo in the South. Yet, research tells us many young people are sexual active and, as such, both want and need access to information regarding their health, relationships, and birth control options. And for those youth not yet sexually active, they still both want and need to know about their bodies and ways to protect themselves in the future. There is a sense of urgency around this topic. Our state ranks 3rd in teen births, 3rd in gonorrhea infections, and our state capitol, Jackson, has the 4th highest HIV infection rate among metropolitan areas in the nation. The truth of the matter is good sex education and access to youth-friendly healthcare in the state of Mississippi is truly a matter of "life and health."

Here is a bit of our backstory: In 2011, a newly passed state law required school districts in the state to adopt either abstinence-only-until-marriage sex education (only teaches about abstinence as a way to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases) or abstinence-plus sex education (emphasizing abstinence, but also teaches youth about other birth control options). Therefore, depending on where you live in Mississippi, the type of sex education a young person may receive in school could be severely lacking compared to other young people just a few miles away in a different school district. The passing of this sex education law in 2011 was the beginning of Teen Heath Mississippi (THMS).

We offer youth a voice on matters that impact their lives. To ensure this, THMS has four youth-led initiatives: Mississippi Youth Council (MYCouncil), Mississippi Youth Summit (MYSummit), the ME. Project (Mind Elevation.) and Mississippi Youth Voice (MYVoice). Through these initiatives we provide training for young people about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and how to advocate for these and other issues that impact Mississippi youth.

THMS also believes that adults play an important role in ensuring young people have the resources and information to lead healthy and happy lives. THMS partners with the Mississippi State Department of Health on the Creating Healthy and Responsible Teens (CHART) sex education initiative. Through CHART, we train public school teachers in partnering school districts across the state to provide evidence-based, medically accurate sex education in middle and high school. We founded the Mississippi Sex Education Training Cadre, which trains youth-serving adults across the state on various sex education curricula, content, and facilitation skills. Teen Health Mississippi also offers trainings for parents! Our most popular parent training is "How to Have 'the Talk' with Your Teen."

We are always looking for innovative ways to link youth across the state to the information and resources they need. We work with youth, school districts, healthcare centers, the Mississippi State Department of Health, the Women's Foundation of Mississippi, the Human Rights Campaign, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Mississippi to ensure young people in Mississippi have access to the information and resources to lead healthy and happy lives. Each of these partnerships allows us to increase our reach in providing trainings and resources to communities across the state.

Since we started this work, we have increased access to high-quality sex education in the state's most vulnerable school districts, increased access to a variety of birth control options in communities with an uptick in teen pregnancy and STI rates, empowered youth to be vocal about their rights around healthcare, and established meaningful partnerships with communities. We work closely with providers and youth in order to make sure our healthcare system is best serving teens. Because at the end of the day, we know that **if we are serving our youth successfully, quality of care will increase for all.**

Hope L. Crenshaw, PhD
Executive Director, Teen Health Mississippi

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THMS

GENERAL FAQS

Does Teen Health Mississippi only work in Clarksdale and Jackson?

Teen Health Mississippi has two offices, one in Clarksdale and one in Jackson. However, these are not the only communities that Teen Health Mississippi works in. These offices are just considered home-base for Teen Health Mississippi team members. Our programs serve youth all across the state. For example, we work directly with Aaron E. Henry Community Heath Services Center in Tunica and Quitman County. We have a formal partnership with the Mississippi University for Women, and we work with youth in our Mississippi Youth Council who attend schools everywhere from Oxford to the Coast.

What does it mean to be youth-friendly?

Youth-friendly healthcare is accessible to all young people and the services meet youth expectations and needs and improve their health.

What is abstinence-plus sex education?

Abstinence-plus sex education emphasizes abstinence, but also teaches youth about options to prevent unintended pregnancies and STI transmission. Teen Health Mississippi works with Mississippi school districts to implement high-quality sex education policy and curricula.

Why are you focused on sexual and reproductive health in Mississippi?

We believe all young people in Mississippi deserve access to high-quality sex education and youth-friendly healthcare to attain their highest level of health. Our state ranks 3rd in teen birth rates, 3rd in gonorrhea infections, and our state capitol, Jackson, has the 4th highest HIV infection rate among metropolitan areas in the nation. The truth of the matter is good sex education and access to youth-friendly healthcare in the state of Mississippi is truly a matter of "life and health." We are dedicated to improving outcomes for youth in our state.

Why are you focused on high-quality sex education?

Research tells us many young people are sexual active and, as such, both want and need access to information regarding their health, relationships, and birth control options. And, for those youth not yet sexually active, they still both want and need to know about their bodies and ways to protect themselves in the future. We support the sexual and reproductive health and rights of Mississippi youth, with a specific focus on developing quality relationships and open and honest dialogue between youth and supportive adults, while trusting that young people can make informed decisions about their health and lives.

How is Teen Health Mississippi funded?

Teen Health Mississippi is a 501c3 nonprofit organization registered with the Mississippi Secretary of State. We receive funding from grants, foundations, earned revenue through our trainings and contract work, and individual donations. We complete an annual financial audit at the end of our fiscal year. Our fiscal year runs from July 1-June 30. If you are interested in funding our work, contact Hope L. Crenshaw at hope@teenhealthms.org.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THMS

YOUTH FAQS

Do you partner with youth directly?

We work with teens in a variety of capacities. Youth serve on our board of directors, drive our programming, and act as advisers when developing new training and resources. Specifically, our Mississippi Youth Council provides trainings and house meetings to youth around the state. We also host an annual Mississippi Youth Summit that is open to young people across the state to learn more about advocacy in their community. We are an organization dedicated to partnering with youth.

I am a Mississippi youth and I am interested in Teen Health Mississippi. How can I get involved?

Youth engagement is a number one priority for Teen Health Mississippi. There are many different ways that youth can be involved in our work. If you are interested in getting involved, contact Justin Lofton, our Youth Engagement Coordinator, at justin@teenhealthms.org.

TRAINING

How much do trainings cost? Are trainings free?

Teen Heath Mississippi offers a variety of trainings that are geared toward youth-serving adults. This includes parents, clergy, teachers, healthcare providers, and community organizers. Many times we offer trainings in partnership with other organizations and the trainings can be free of charge. We are also available for hire if you are looking for a specific training you want to provide. If you are interested in hosting a training or attending a training, contact Monica Coleman, our Director of Education and Training, at monica@teenhealthms.org.

QUOTES ABOUT OUR WORK

MYSummit equipped me with the tools needed to achieve my own advocacy goals and organize the people who I need to help me do that.-Ava, Murrah High School

MYSummit was the best experience I have encountered, and I wish I could it over again!-Lionel, Clarksdale High School

MYSummit was very eye-opening! I was able to learn about how issues impact youth across the state, got the tools to do something about them, and developed lasting relationships with my peers. -Jervia, Alcorn State University

The Mississippi Youth Council has been a really eye opening experience so far. I've been able to learn about the political process by participating in it directly which isn't something a lot of seventeen-year-olds get to do. MYCouncil has given me direction just working in my own school district talking to students about sex ed issues or talking to authorities about how to change policies for the better.-Quintin Harry, Pascagoula High School

Our youth are suffering from ignorance because of the current system. In order for it to be fixed, it requires someone to speak up so it made proud because I knew that I was one of the many people who were willing to stand up and speak out to ignite some change. .-Jermány Gray, Murrah High School

I'm a lot better versed in the political and advocating aspect of making change. I can bring these new and polished skills and pour them right back into the program that nurtured them. I'm not ashamed to admit that I was hit by a lot of curve balls in the aspect of MYCouncil, but now I know what to expect and I feel I could tackle next year with knowledge I could've never imagined grasping.-ReShaunna Shelby, University of Southern Mississippi

MYCouncil really drove my passion further for sex education not only in our state but also specifically at my school. It showed me that I wasn't the only youth who cared about sex education and that my advocacy work really was giving a voice to the many students who also wanted sex education.-Emily Kruse, St. Andrew's Episcopal School

My experience at Capitol Day was amazing and eye opening for many reasons. It felt like I was the one teaching rather than being taught because I was more familiar with lobbying than the person I brought with me. I became the person that Jadan Farrow followed. When I first met a representative, I was nervous to meet him in his private office because I did not know what to expect. Surprisingly, the representative we spoke to, Representative Mims, was kind enough to give us young kids an ear. Although I felt like he did not really care for supporting House Bill 1278, I knew that we could work on selling it better. -Von Jackson, Ruleville Central High School

I have been passionate about making change ever since I attended my very lackluster classes in sex education. Since coming to Millsaps, I have tried to get involved in as many ways as I could. However, never have I been so blessed as to have the opportunity to talk to House representatives-- the very people that make important decisions about our education system. On campus, I talk to as many people as I can about the changes that need to be made with our current sex education. However, Capitol Day was an experience on a completely different level. That day made me realize that every step we took in this process-- contacting legislators and expressing our views to them-- made a real difference. This bill may or may not pass this legislative session, but I know that we have made a positive impact for Millsaps and have grown exponentially as advocates and leaders.-Ashley Chang, Millsaps College

Going to Jackson for Capitol Day was a life-changing experience. Prior to that day, I wanted to be a journalist. I left knowing that I wanted to work in public policy. I loved talking to my representatives and letting my voice be heard. I was deeply and truly empowered that day. I realized the power and impact of my voice and vote. The legislators that had put on pedestals became other normal human beings. I want to continue having that feeling and working with and talking to my legislators about sex education.-Kenyatta Thomas, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College