

BACKGROUND

The Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI) first organized a Connection Session mini-conference in 2016 to convene health care professionals from multiple disciplines with a shared goal of diving deeper into a specific content area to improve adolescent health. Since then, AHI has hosted annual Connection Sessions on adolescent-related topics to further interdisciplinary learning using innovative, multi-pronged approaches. CEUs are offered for social work, nursing contact hours, and medical CMEs.

Until 2020, the Connection Session framework had been a hands-on, engaging mix of the latest research, cross-discipline problem-solving, application of best practices, and activities to authentically incorporate youth voice. As the 2020 pandemic forced professional development planning to accommodate learning in a virtual platform, necessity became the mother of invention, and we adapted the model to be delivered virtually.

The cost of Connection Sessions has been supported through registration fees and Innovation grants from the UM Office of Continuous Medical Education and Lifelong Learning.

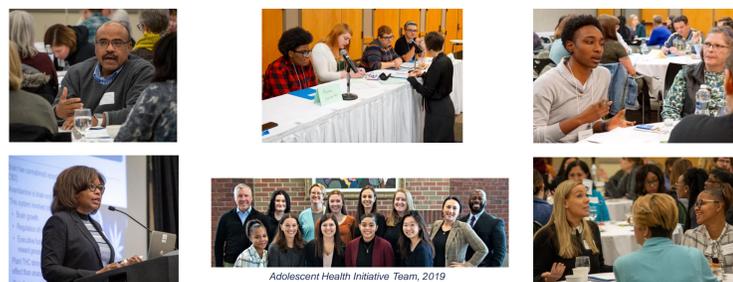
Key Components



Interdisciplinary Emphasis

An audience size of 70-90 people has allowed for meaningful small group discussion, dynamic Q & As with youth and other subject matter experts, and community sharing. Participant roles include:

- Administrators
- Health Educators
- Medical Assistants
- Nurse Practitioners
- Physicians
- Physician's Assistants
- Registered Nurses
- Social Workers
- Community Health Professionals



Past Connection Sessions

Year	Topic	# of participants
2016:	AFFIRMING CARE FOR TRANSGENDER YOUTH	80
2017:	ADOLESCENTS AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER	64
2018:	IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING TRAFFICKED YOUTH	82
2019:	THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF LEGALIZED MARIJUANA	91
2020:	ADOLESCENT-CENTERED TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES	130

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Planning

For the 2020 virtual event, AHI's planning committee had many discussions about how to identify the most effective components of the model and adapt these for virtual delivery. AHI's planning team met more frequently than in past years, tested novel software options, activities, and approaches, and partnered with youth in new ways to offer the first virtual mini-conference on trauma-informed care for adolescents.

2020: ADOLESCENT-CENTERED TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

Goals: To gain a deeper understanding of youth perspectives on trauma-informed practices, identify strategies from emerging research, and exchange best practices in adolescent-centered trauma-informed practices

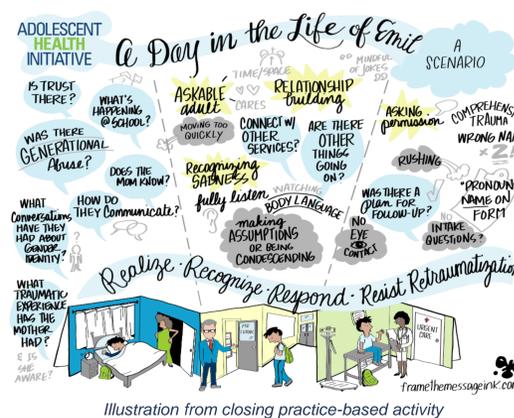
Program:

- Youth-led opening activity on youth perceptions of trauma, including TikTok video clips to illustrate ways youth provide support to each other
- Keynote speaker on adolescent needs for trauma-informed practices
- Series of three 15-minute talks, "Strategies from the Field," included practice-based strategies from three disciplines, social work, medicine, and psychiatry
- Closing interdisciplinary case study developed by youth where participants problem-solved in breakout rooms

Opportunities with a Virtual Environment

Incorporating Varied Forms of Media:

- Leaning into the "new normal" of the pandemic, youth presenters incorporated engaging, current social media posts and clips. Since the event, our team has adopted this practice in other talks.
- AHI incorporated more audio and video clips into the virtual program than in past face-to-face events.
- In an effort to keep the half day meeting engaging, we invited an illustrator to do live illustration during two of the activities.



Accessibility:

A virtual setting for the Connection Session allowed AHI to eliminate hosting costs, thus reducing registration fees. Similarly, the need to travel was eliminated, allowing for more people to attend the event from outside of our region. This year's Connection Session had 130 participants registered, the highest number of participants than any Session in the past.

Challenges

As with most virtual conferences and events this year, technology was the biggest challenge.

- The 2020 Connection Session was held in the fall, and while most participants seemed familiar with Zoom, many had never participated in breakout rooms. We tried to replicate the effectiveness of small group interdisciplinary discussion activities from the past by utilizing breakout rooms. Due to the larger number of participants, we were not able to place facilitators in each room, and we relied on participants to lead their own discussions. We received feedback that some of these discussions were more robust than others. As planners of the event, AHI learned alongside participants about the best practices for small group discussions in Zoom.
- We took a risk and introduced an additional platform for the case activity. Google Forms allowed us to share images, discussion prompts, and provide space for groups to share comments, but having an additional format was confusing for both participants and planners.
- The built-in and intentional networking opportunities in face-to-face events of the past were challenging to recreate in a virtual setting. Similarly, the community-building and positive feelings associated with learning and problem-solving with professionals from other fields seemed to be less powerful. As AHI examines evaluation results to plan for the next year, we are particularly interested in learning about other successful models of virtual inter-professional education.

IMPACT

2020 Evaluation

Despite the challenges of our new format, evaluation results were still strong.

Youth Presenters

- 4.65/5 → Quality of presentation
- 4.72/5 → Content was relevant to my practice
- 4.7/5 → Clarity of presenter

Keynote: Polly Gipson, PhD

- 4.73/5 → Quality of presentation
- 4.72/5 → Content was relevant to my practice
- 4.75/5 → Clarity of presenter

"Strategies from the Field"

- 4.64/5 → Quality of presentation
- 4.64/5 → Content was relevant to my practice
- 4.62/5 → Clarity of presenter

95.4% of participants stated that they intended to change practice as a result of the event, in the following ways:

- "Get consent at every level during their visit and exam"
- "Make our office more trauma-informed, at every level, from reception to check out"
- "Be intentional with utilizing trauma-informed language"
- "Encourage and support local schools to learn more about trauma-informed care"
- "Bring awareness about secondary trauma and self care"
- "Always ask for consent to examine patient, will use affirming language"

Future Directions

As we plan our 2021 event, we are considering a hybrid model to capture the best of both worlds. Increased access to the event and greater attendance is a benefit, but we do not believe it outweighs the positive outcomes of face-to-face interdisciplinary learning. We hope to return to face-to-face, while offering some activities remotely.

AHI plans to continue offering Connection Sessions in Michigan in the future, as the framework is successful, effective, participatory, and easy to replicate. The cost is low, and the outcomes offer an excellent return on investment.