

Youth Participatory Action Communication Research: A Model for Developing Youth-Driven Health Campaigns

Kikut-Stein et al., *Health Communication* [2024]

WHAT WAS THE STUDY?

From 2021 to 2022, several teams of West Philadelphia high schoolers, worked with Annenberg School for Communication researchers Ava Kikut-Stein (Ph.D. '23) and Prof. Andy Tan, Penn undergraduate mentors, and Netter Center for Community Partnerships staff, **to develop a health messaging campaign around an issue crucial for the wellbeing of their community: encouraging their peers to seek help for mental health challenges.**



WHAT DID THEY LEARN?

A survey sent to peers at 13 different Philadelphia high schools found that :

92% of respondents experienced recent mental health challenges,



but only 39% had sought help in the past six months.



The odds for seeking out help for mental health challenges were

4X
HIGHER

among those who strongly agreed with the statement: "I know who to turn to when I need help coping with mental health challenges," than those who didn't.

50%

of respondents strongly trusted **friends** as a source for mental health information, while only

36%

strongly trusted **doctors**,

34%

strongly trusted **parents**, and

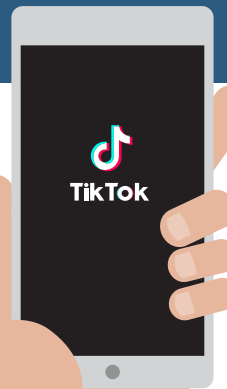
24%

strongly trusted **grandparents**.

WHAT DID THEY DO?

The research team created TikTok-style videos encouraging their peers to ask for help when experiencing mental health challenges and paired with a service they'd use themselves: the Philly Hopeline, a free and confidential helpline for emotional support open to all youth in the Philadelphia region.

Results with participants from 8 Philadelphia high schools suggested that **the youth-created videos strengthened confidence in their ability to seek help and intentions to use the Philly Hopeline.**



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Additional co-authors include undergrad Penn students, staff from the Netter Center, and West Philadelphia high school youth.

Ava Kikut-Stein (Ph.D. '23) is a recent grad and lead author of a recently published paper: "Youth Participatory Action Communication Research: A Model for Developing Youth-Driven Health Campaigns." Professor Andy Tan is a co-author and acted as a mentor.

