

Project STAY

An Overview of Programming



Project STAY is administered jointly by the New York Presbyterian Hospital Ambulatory Care Network Corporation and by the Harlem Health Promotion Center (HHPC) within the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

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Who we are and what we do

Project STAY (Services to Assist Youth) is a program overseen by the Harlem Health Promotion Center (HHPC). HHPC is a grant-funded research and clinical service center that is housed within the Department of Sociomedical Sciences at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. It works with community leaders, academic scholars, and public health professionals with the aim of serving the Harlem and broader New York City (NYC) communities. It has two components:

- A Specialized Care Center (SCC) to serve young people who are HIV positive.
- A Youth Access Program (YAP) which conducts community outreach, screening, and linkage to care services for young people involved in risk-taking behaviors.
 - A youth-friendly primary care clinic which provides medical and mental health services for young people involved in risk-taking behaviors.

Both the SCC and the YAP are integrated into the range of services offered by the Comprehensive Health Program (CHP) at New York Presbyterian Hospital. CHP is a Designated AIDS Center (DAC) and provides clinical and supportive services to children, adults and seniors living with, or at-risk for HIV. For more information on the staff involved, please visit the **Project STAY website**.

Specialized Care Center

The Specialized Care Center (SCC) supports adolescents and young adults living with HIV by providing them with a “medical home” made up of medical providers, social workers, health educators, and other support staff who provide a comprehensive range of services such as screening for sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, Pregnancy, medical evaluation, treatment and management, mental health counseling, and patient navigation designed especially for teens and young adults living in and around NYC. Although they primarily serve young adults who are HIV positive, they serve at risk youth as well. SCC staff members are specifically trained in adolescent care. Services are available five days a week between 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at 622 West 168th Street, **Vanderbilt Clinic** 4th Floor.

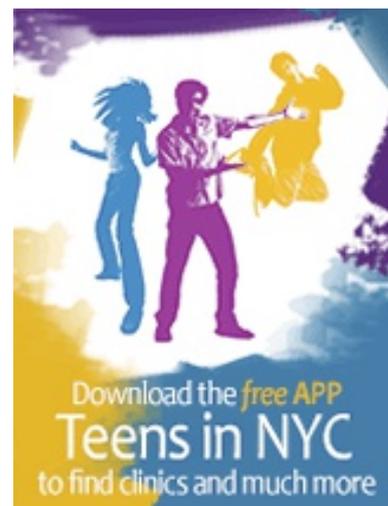


as medical providers, social workers, and trained health educators. These adolescent health specialists provide outreach, education, and counseling in community settings on various health topics, including sexual and reproductive health. YAP staff also provide on-site testing at schools and community agencies for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. They also link clients to care at youth-friendly clinics in NYC, such as two clinics located in Northern Manhattan operated by Project STAY, as well as other clinics.

Youth Access Program

The Youth Access Program (YAP) assists adolescents and young adults by providing them with an age-specific support network made up of health specialists such

Young people at these schools and community agencies are also given an app that helps them to locate clinics in their area.



For more information about the app, visit the [New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene website](#).

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In addition to the Specialized Care Center clinic noted above, YAP has a primary care clinic for high-risk youth located at the **Farrell Community Health Center** (610 West 158th Street).



The clinic provides: physical exams, STI/HIV screening and management, Pep/PrEP assessment, screening and management; pregnancy testing and birth control counseling and management; vaccinations; primary care; mental health counseling and support. Services are available on Thursdays from 2:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

"I would just like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the hard work, communication and patience you have had with me in putting our Town Hall together with your staff. I must say that they were absolutely professional, well-educated and came to the event, not just on time but early! The students were very receptive to the information and they learned a lot!"

--Crystal Tejada, LMSW

*Social Worker,
High School for Excellence and
Innovation*

Who we serve

Project STAY serves a variety of populations including the following, all of which are between the ages of 13-24:

- Young People who are HIV positive
- Youth who are at high risk for HIV
- Justice-Involved Youth
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Pansexual Young People
- Young Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSMs)



Where we do outreach

In order to fully serve young people from these high-risk populations, Project STAY provides outreach at different alternative/transfer and empowerment schools throughout the five boroughs. This allows for us to reach a diversity of youth in an effort to increase their awareness and access to health care. All of the listed agencies below, including the colleges, are programs where we provide STI/HIV testing, risk reduction education and linkages to care. Some of our long-standing partners, schools and organizations include:

Alternative/transfer and empowerment schools

Empowerment and alternative/transfer schools are small, academically rigorous, full-time high schools designed to re-engage students who have dropped out or who have fallen behind in credits.

- Bard HS
- Cascades HS
- School for Cooperative and Technical Education
- The East Side Community School
- Facing History HS
- Gotham Professional Arts Academy HS
- High School For Excellence and Innovation
- Manhattan Alternate Learning Center
- Satellite Forsyth Academy HS
- Satellite Midtown Academy HS
- The Young Women's Leadership School of East Harlem.

* Schools and organizations above contain hyperlinks to their websites. Click for more information.

Colleges:

- Fashion Institute of Technology
- Bronx Community College

Organizations

Workforce Development programs:

- Year UP
- Center for Employment Opportunities

Justice Involved Youth Programs:

- Center for Court Innovation
- Friends of Island Academy
- Getting Out, Staying Out
- Harlem Commonwealth Council
ARCHES

Agencies serving LGBTQ Youth:

- AIDS Service Center of NYC
- The Church of St Lukes in the Field
- New Alternatives for LGBT Homeless Youth
- SafeSpace

Drug treatment programs:

- Argus Community Center

Frequently Asked Questions About Youth Access Program Outreach Event

What's the age limit for the Project STAY Youth Access Program?

We work with youth ages 14-24. All are welcome within this age range!

How soon can YAP visit my school or organization? Is it too late for something this week?

We try to schedule events at least THREE WEEKS in advance. Most events are booked a month in advance and space is limited, so book your event now!

What information do you provide in the YAP presentation?

Our initial overview presentation is an interactive PowerPoint which reviews sexually transmitted diseases and HIV with a brief overview about birth control. We try to keep it to 40 minutes. In addition to this core presentation, other educational presentations can be provided based on the needs of the organization

What types of tests do you offer?

Project STAY can provide non-invasive tests for common sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) such as Chlamydia and Gonorrhea as well as HIV testing.

The STI tests are done with urine samples and the HIV test is administered orally.

Both are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL to any youth participating in the program.

I'm interested in hosting the presentation, but I'm concerned about the testing afterwards. Is it safe to do testing outside of a clinic?

Yes! Project STAY's testing methods are non-invasive: all tests are either urine or oral samples so there are no needles, sharps (or other blood drawing techniques) used.

We'd love to test on-site, but my supervisor is concerned about parental consent. What are the legal issues around this?

In New York State, minors are protected by law and can receive reproductive and sexual health care services WITHOUT parental consent. However, we understand if you feel the need to obtain parental consent beforehand and we can provide a draft of an opt-out parental letter for that purpose.

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Will you do the presentation without the testing?

Our schedule is so busy that we try to give preference to organizations that allow us to do testing on-site. If you are interested in just health education we can refer you to other programs that offer similar workshops.

What about the results? What do you do if someone's results are positive?

We return to your site with results about 2-3 weeks after the original event. If a young person has a positive test result, they will be contacted to come to the Project STAY clinic for treatment for themselves and any partners. If there are HIV positive results, a Project STAY social worker will provide psychosocial counseling off-site at our clinic and offer the client an opportunity to enroll in our HIV+ medical and case management program (Project STAY's Specialized Care Center). Client confidentiality is protected throughout the entire process. We have over 80 clients living with HIV in our program. They are on medications and doing extremely well, which allows them to go to school, college, or work.

We'd love to have testing done but space is a major issue. How much room do you need?

Each student would need to meet one-on-one with a health educator in

any space that has walls/doors to provide both visual and audio barriers. Two rooms would be ideal.

We are not very tech savvy. Do we need fancy equipment for your presentation?

No. We provide all necessary equipment. You provide the youth and a room!

Who provides the services?

Dr. Alwyn Cohall is the Founder and Director of Project STAY (Services to Assist Youth). The program has been around for more than 20 years, and is affiliated with Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, and New York Presbyterian Hospital. Funding for these services comes through the [New York State Department of Health's AIDS Institute](#), in addition to the [Deerfield Foundation](#).

Dr. Cohall's team consists of health educators, nurse-practitioners, and social workers. Student volunteers from various fields (medicine, social work, nursing, and public health) assist the core team in providing health education, risk assessment, and counseling.

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Training the Next Generation of Public Health and Clinical Providers



The attainment of practical skills to effectively engage in serving the public health needs of Upper Manhattan and the NYC Metropolitan Area—whether it be as a public health practitioner, doctor, nurse, pharmacist, health educator, or in some other related field—is a keen challenge for students. Both graduate and undergraduate coursework often provides theoretical background, but little opportunity to apply knowledge in practical ways.

In an effort to bridge the gap between academic training and community needs, Project STAY utilizes student collaborators from fields as diverse as public health, health informatics, nutrition, health promotion, journalism, and pharmacy in a structured skill-building and workforce development format that is hard for many

students to find through traditional internships and volunteer experiences.

“Working for Project STAY... has been a very rewarding experience, as I have had the opportunity to not only educate and empower youth, but... to understand the complexities of sexual health among adolescents. We may be teaching them something that they will then... share with others.”

*--Jolene Lalas,
Former Student Health Educator*

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Clinical Exposure and Skills

Over the past four years Project STAY has provided training to more than 60 students from the fields of nursing, public health, social work, and medicine. At project STAY's two clinics, students learn by shadowing clinicians, participating in clinical rotations, and providing patients with supportive counseling and medical care. They are engaged in counseling, testing and treatment for STI's; HIV counseling and testing; comprehensive, individualized medical care for HIV-infected and at-risk youth; and broad-ranging psychosocial support services.



Julen Harris worked with Project STAY's Mobile Health Team for three years while obtaining her MPH at Columbia University. She eventually went on to attend Medical School at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

Students turn passion into profession



"My experience with Project STAY helped me become the Family Nurse Practitioner that I am. This program and Dr. Cohall opened the world of sex health and adolescent health to me. Before becoming involved with STAY I was focused on addiction medicine and had little exposure to sex/HIV health. Now I am working in clinical training to be an HIV provider to open my own teen clinic in Brooklyn"

-- Philip Gyura,

*Family Nurse Practitioner;
Graduate, Columbia University School of
Nursing*

To read more about Philip's work [click here](#).



“Project STAY really challenged my vision of what healthcare can be. I realized that the role of a medical provider is tricky-- there is a fine line to walk of practicing medicine in an impactful way without creating additional burdens for our patients. Dr. Cohall was a great role model to me while I was a Health Educator for Project STAY. He showed me aspects of patient interaction that are crucial to a medical provider's success in working with young people: being flexible, clearly communicating with patients, fostering trust. I now realize that we have a very short time to build a relationship with a young patient in order to get at what's really going on. It's also important to see a patient's medical and health needs as one piece of their broader lives—their home, school, and family—even their past. I struck gold in finding this opportunity with Project STAY.”



*-- Matthew Perry,
Medical student;
Alpert Medical School, Brown University*

Practica and Internships

HHPC offers a unique opportunity for students from many health fields to gain critical hands-on experience. Students can expect to gain the following skills while working with Project STAY:

- Experience in the field by helping to develop health education strategies, interventions, and programs.
- In-depth knowledge of a given community or population in order to provide meaningful educational information and resources.
- Keen communications skills including one-on-one counseling and public speaking to large groups.
- Evaluation skills related to the impact of health education programming.
- Skills in administration and the logistical aspects of health education programming.
- Working knowledge of disease states and clinical treatments.

Public Health Exposure and Skills

Student collaborators have had transformative effects on HHPC as well as the Harlem and Upper Manhattan communities. HHPC's student collaborator model provides advantages for all involved and has the potential to be replicated widely. One prime benefit to organizations for engaging in this model is that collaborations with students expand organizational capacity as they are engaged in meaningful, hands-on aspects of almost every area of our programming. Workforce training also provides students from national and international universities and colleges with practical experiences in the following areas:

- Developing meaningful working relationships with community members as well as with partners at the stakeholder level. This happens through engagement with the network of community-based organizations we have long-standing relationships with. Additionally, there is a unique opportunity for building relationships with our partners at district and city public health offices as well as with other public officials.

- Learning how to form meaningful relationships with healthcare consumers that set the tone for how they will function as healthcare providers as their careers progress.



"Working at Project STAY has brought me back to my passion for healthcare and why I pursued the field of nursing. It allows me to have meaningful conversations with adolescents that inspire me to learn to the fullest so that I can one day serve them and their families as a family nurse practitioner. STAY is incredibly unique in that I am encouraged to get to know my patients and make sure that their physical and emotional needs are met. It's a wonderful place for kids to get healthcare and for me to learn how to be the best at it."

*-- Kathryn Tanner,
Family Nurse Practitioner; Graduate,
Columbia University*

Other Programming

Consumer Health Education

- Videos
 - Emergency Contraception:
 - There's Always Plan B
 - Improving Access to Care:
 - Cells in Da'Hood is an animated video to educate youth about sexually transmitted infections and HIV developed by HHPC with support from Abbott Laboratories and the Healthy Monday Campaign. This video was integrated into Project STAY outreach activities.

Health Provider Training

CDC STD/HIV Prevention Training Center:

- The National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers (NNPTC) is a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-funded group of training centers created in partnership with health departments and universities. The national network of NNPTCs are dedicated to increasing

the knowledge and skills of health professionals in the areas of sexual health. The NNPTC provides health professionals with a spectrum of state-of-the-art educational opportunities including experiential learning with an emphasis on STD treatment and prevention.

- New York City STD/HIV Prevention Training Center (NYC PTC) is a program at Columbia University, within the NNPTC, dedicated to increasing the sexual health knowledge and skills of medical health professionals in the prevention, diagnosis, screening, management, and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. We offer classroom and web-based courses, hands-on training, clinical consults and technical assistance to clinicians, such as physicians, physician assistants, nurses, and nurse practitioners.

The NYC PTC is one of eight regional training centers funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is a member of the National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers. For more information, you may visit their [website](#).

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- Videos
 - An Empowering Approach to Managing Youth At-Risk for Sexually-transmitted Infections
- Webinars (archived): To access webinars please click on the hyperlinks, which will redirect you to a page where you will need to fill out a brief registration (one to five questions) and then you will have free access to all webinars.
 - [Adolescents/Youth Adults](#)
- [Boricua Youth Study \(BYS\) - Substance Use/Abuse & HIV/STI Risk Behaviors in Puerto Rican Youth Growing Up:](#) Funded by the NIH as an R01, BYS is an initiative created by the New York State Psychiatric Institute (Principal Investigator Cristiane Duarte, PhD). The major goal of this grant is to prospectively follow cohorts of Hispanic youth growing up in NYC and Puerto Rico, and examine patterns of risk-taking behaviors. Our subcontract will specifically address screening these youth for STIs and HIV, and providing necessary treatment and linkages to care. Alwyn Cohall, MD and Renee Cohall, LCSW are co-investigators
- [HOTT](#): an online interactive graphic novel for HIV/STI education, prevention, and links to testing and treatment that was created by and for young men who have sex with men (MSM) of color in NYC. HOTT was created by Dr. Christel Hyden, the Program Evaluator for Project STAY. To learn more about HOTT, visit the [website](#).

Research

Project STAY collaborates with a wide range of researchers interested in improving health outcomes for youth at-risk for, or living with, HIV. Examples of [current research projects](#) include:

- [Project for the Enhancement and Alignment of the Continuum of Care \(PEACOC\)](#): Funded by NICHD, HRSA, CDC. The goal of this multi-site project is to implement and evaluate strategies designed to enhance linkage and retention in care for youth living with HIV. Alwyn Cohall, MD is the PI for site 82, and Maria Perez is the Linkage to Care Coordinator

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Selectied Publications by Project STAY Staff

Research Articles

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Future Directions

We are encouraged by Governor Cuomo's bold proclamation to end the Epidemic of HIV infection in New York State. In addition to our current work in this area, we will expand efforts to prevent new HIV infection by increasing community outreach efforts to promote awareness and access to PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). One mechanism for doing so will be to increase the use of Peer educators to inform, educate, and link MSMs to our program for evaluation. We are collaborating with the AIDS Service Center of NYC (ASCNYC) to integrate Peer educators into our program. They will use both direct contact as well as social media to accomplish these objectives.

We are also very concerned about the need to provide intensive care and clinical services to at-risk youth who are caught up in the web of mass incarceration. In the future we will provide care to young people who are transitioning out of the justice system and into society. We will work closely with the Mailman School of Public Health, New York Presbyterian Hospital, the New York State Psychiatric Institute as well as other academic, community and philanthropic partners to establish a “transitions” clinic that will provide coordinated medical services, mental health counseling, substance abuse counseling, referrals for academic enrichment, job training, and other core services.

Additionally, we are developing a Health and Wellness component to the Bridge UP initiative. Bridge UP is an academic enrichment program, supported by the Helen Gurley Brown Trust, which focuses on improving academic and critical thinking skills of middle and high school students in Manhattan and the Bronx. The program is housed in several branches of the New York Public Library. We will be creating programming for these students and their parents to help enhance health outcomes and support their involvement in this important program.

