

# Physician and Community Partnerships for Reducing Health Disparities and Inequity: The Development and Implementation of a Holistic After School Program for At-Risk Youth

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## Abstract

**Background:** Many adolescents are exposed to at risk habits and behaviors that influence their own development into juvenile delinquents. These risky behaviors can be found in negative peer influences, at risk communities, or even in families in which unfavorable behaviors are seen as positive. Community interventions that involve mentoring and after school programs while enforcing positive behavior, behavior monitoring, academic support, and providing a safe space have been shown to reduce the number of students entering delinquency. **Methods:** The Miami Dade County's Departments of Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces (MDPROS), Juvenile Services (JSD) and Public Schools (MDCPS) have partnered with the University of Miami, Florida International University and Miami Dade College to design an after school program that focuses on academic support, mentoring, and wellness via nutrition education and physical activity. The Youth Enrichment and Sports (YES) program targets underserved youths ages 12-to-17 in areas that are currently experiencing high rates of youth violence and truancy. Mental and physical health outcomes will be collected. **Conclusions:** The YES program demonstrates the need for an orchestrated and interdisciplinary group of medical and public health professionals to better address and continue the dialogue on the nation's challenging health issues, many of which can be prevented through community programs.

## Partnering Physicians & Community

### The current challenges in the community

- Limited dialogue between community and healthcare systems surrounding health and wellness issues that impact local citizens.
- Lack of sustainable community based interventions and programs.
- Little intervention in at risk students who struggle academically and face social isolation and alienation
- At risk areas in which drugs and violence are favorable in the media and in the community
- Little parental involvement, intervention, or households in which unfavorable behavioral problems exist

### Concurrently there is a need for :

- An after school intervention that would provide academic support for students struggling
- An intervention that would seek to keep youth off the streets so as to not be exposed to negative peer influences and to violence or drugs
- Mentors who would support these peers as they transition into adulthood

## Objectives

- Design an after school program that serves adolescent populations.
- Target at risk youths who have either had first offense with the Department of Juvenile Services or identified at risk by their school and/or community.
- Program will provide academic assistance, mental health assessments, nutrition and wellness program, sports and recreation, and leadership skills.
- 3 tier program that would target
  - 12-14 year olds
  - 15-17 year olds (internship program)
  - 18 and beyond (Counselors -in-Training)
- Develop community leaders who will
  - Be health advocates for their community
  - Become mentors for their peers
  - Have opportunities for income, college education
- Allow physicians in training to have a part in developing community intervention programs like Fit2Lead in order to develop field experience
- Allow physicians in training a unique perspective in community health issues by working with a multidisciplinary team

## The Multidisciplinary Team

- Miami Dade Parks, Recreational and Open Spaces Department (MDPROS)
- Miami Dade County Juvenile Services Department (JSD)
- Miami Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS)
- Florida International University (FIU)
- University of Miami Miller School of Medicine (UMMSM)
- Florida Introduces Physical Activity and Nutrition to Youth (FLIPANY)

## Youth Enrichment and Sports (YES) Program Design

### Fit2Lead Component

#### Goals

- Provide structure and stability to at least 400 at risk youth between the ages of 12-14 who are low level offenders referred by JSD;
- To decrease juvenile delinquency by providing safe places to learn and be active and healthy;
- To provide meaningful and sustainable programs that teach life skills through sports and recreational activities.



### Daily Program Schedule

Time	Activity	Days
3:00-3:50 p.m.	Setup/training	
4:00-5:10 p.m.	Academic Support	Monday-Friday
5:10-6:30 p.m.	Sports/Leadership Enrichment Recreation	Mon and Wed Tues and Thurs
6:30 p.m.	Dinner	
7:00 p.m.	Dismissal	
7:00-8:00 p.m.	Cleanup and Feedback	



### Program Content

- Academic Support**
  - Hired MDCPS teachers to provide tutoring assistance
- Sports Leadership**
  - Volleyball, basketball, flag football, track and field, soccer, etc. fundamentals
  - Co-ed format, rules, regulations, basic fundamentals, sportsmanship, leadership, teamwork
- Social and Emotion Skills**
  - Communication w/ peers, parents, adults, verbal vs. nonverbal
  - Emotional Regulation- relaxing, emotion suppression, awareness
  - Problem solving/decision making
  - Executive function
- Nutrition Education**
  - Fruits+ veggies= minerals and vitamins
  - Digestion! Fats, Proteins, Carbohydrates
  - Eating Balanced Meals
  - Sugar, Sugar, Fat
  - Hygiene and habits

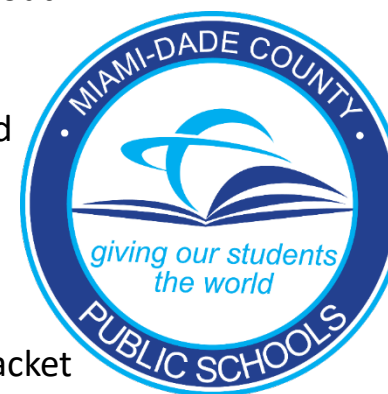
### Physicians in Training's Importance?

- Allows medical students to broaden their patient population experience by working with pediatric populations in a social environment, especially with at risk youths
- Allows medical students to lend a perspective in the developing of curriculum content and logistics
- Allows medical students to have practical experience in program development, communication, and working with multidisciplinary team outside of clinical requirements



## Working with Juvenile Services Department and Miami Dade County Public Schools

- JSD and MDCPS, in collaboration with MDPROS will identify at risk youth between ages 12-17 residing in targeted zip codes and/or targeted schools to participate in FIT2lead and YES programs.
- JSD case managers and school counselors administer evidence-based assessments to identify service needs such as
  - School related problems
  - Negative peer associations
  - Anti social behaviors
- MDCPS requires participants to complete a program registration packet signed by legal guardian or parent
- Medical students will have experience working with community social workers for a truly underserved population in mental health



### YES Internship Program

#### Goals

- Keep at risk youths ages 15-17 from truancy and youth violence
- Give interns an opportunity to work and bring home a paycheck
- Teach them life and work skills
- Create jobs in underserved neighborhood
- Provide a path for education, certifications, a degree, and a job
- Work with local universities to provide credits and training opportunities to interns

### Program Schedule

Feb	March	April	May	June	July
3	2-health	6 decision making	4 problem solving	1 emotion regulation	6 first aid
10	9 health	13 decision making	11 problems solving	8 emotion regulation	13 business ops
17	16 Health	20 time management	18 communication	15 first aid	20 business ops
24 health	23 spring break	27 time management	25 communication	22 first aid	27 closing class
		30 decision making		29 first aid	

#### Logistics

- Paid Part time position (\$10.38/hour)
- Monday-Friday
- Orientation, Enrichment classes, Practical Experience Assignments
- 474 internship total paid hours (\$4910.12)
- Will earn certificate of program completion

#### Practical Experience Assignments

- General After School Program (12 hrs/ week, 3 hrs a day, 60 total hours)
- YES program (12 hrs/week, 60 hrs total)
- Community Park Operations (60 hrs)
- Summer Camp Program (20 hrs a week, 160 hrs)
- Regional Park Operations at 5 sites (30 total hours)
- Eco Adventures delivery (30 hr)

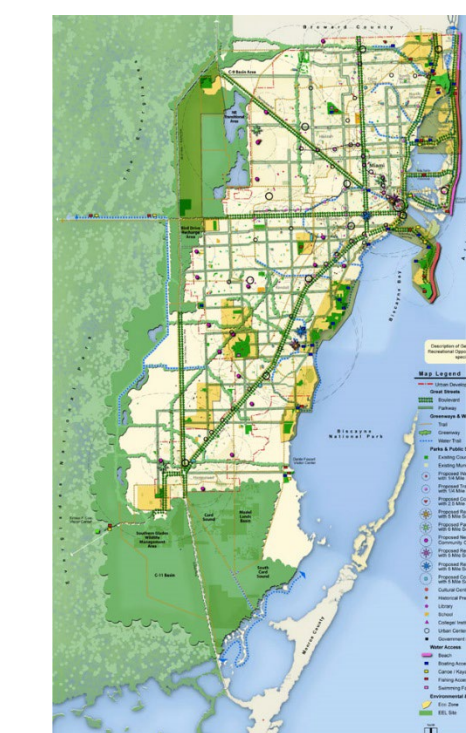


### Physicians in Training's Importance?

- Working with this more mature group allows physicians to understand the complexities how social influences truly affect adolescent mental health and development
- Also, interns may relate better to medical students due to age similarities, and thus this can help with curriculum development and providing approachability for social communication

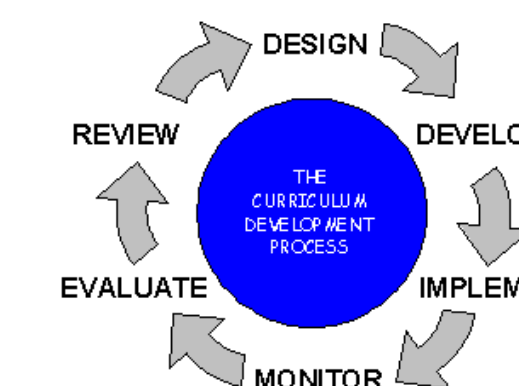
### YES Program Staff Recruitment and Hiring

- Hired 45 facilitators and teachers for 13 sites who, because of their background, education, and experience can introduce specific social and emotional skills needed to teach the communication, emotion regulation, and conflict resolution curriculum.
- Miami Dade College, Barry ST Thomas, FIU and UMMSM all recruited graduate students through job applications, flyers and social media
- 15\$/hr no more than 29 hrs a week, with hours between 3 pm-8pm



## Tasks and Roles

- Designed the wellness curriculum for the YES and Fit2Lead Program
- Referenced curriculum formats and models from University Education Departments, school systems
- Learned how to properly deliver language and content to age appropriate audiences
- Attended weekly meetings with various professionals in decision making
- Assist with orientation, training, recruiting facilitators



## Conclusions/Future Directions

- Will run program in February (currently running as we speak)
- Will measure outcomes and evaluate in June for any improvements or modifications
- Goal is to expand program to incorporate more students and youths
- Successful model to incorporate into other larger cities and at risk youths
- Fine tune curriculum development

## Insights Gained

- The challenges of curriculum development
- The importance of physician interaction with community leaders and citizens to better understand lifestyles
- There needs to be better team work of public officials, physicians and multidisciplinary individuals to combat healthcare issues in the United States.
- There needs to be more advocacy for medical education to incorporate nutrition and physical education so that physicians are better equipped to address patients about better decisions. Current educational curriculums do not allow this to happen
- There needs to be more after school programs targeted at at-risk youths in underserved communities
- Social, academic, and behavioral interventions early in development can decrease juvenile delinquency in future stages of adulthood



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