

Youth Health Centres

Health Promoting Schools (HPS) is an evidence-based, whole school approach to health promotion that guides the work of Nova Scotia Health, Public Health in schools and with school communities.

Public Health works collaboratively with people and partners across school, community, government, and health to foster healthy, inclusive, and vibrant school communities that enable everyone to learn, grow, thrive, and succeed. Our work primarily

focuses on enhancing policies, practices, and aspects of the school and community that have been shown to impact health and learning for children and youth.

The following is an overview of the role of Youth Health Centres (YHCs) and Youth Health Centre Coordinators (YHCCs) and their related contributions to HPS in Nova Scotia.



Youth Health Centres

YHCs are designated youth-friendly spaces located in high schools across the province where youth can:

- Feel safe, included, and valued.
- Share, connect and find ways to meaningfully participate in planning and actions to enhance their school and community environments.
- Receive one-on-one support and navigation to a range of health promoting services, programs, and resources.
- Come together with peers and members of the community to connect on common issues and experiences.
- Build trusting, caring relationships with peers and school staff.
- Voice their concerns and perspectives on issues that impact their lives.

Youth Health Centre Coordinators

The YHCC is part of a multi-disciplinary team of Public Health staff that work at provincial, regional and local levels to advance HPS in Nova Scotia.

YHCCs are regulated health care professionals that are uniquely positioned to work with youth and high schools through YHCs located across the province.

What is the role of Youth Health Centre Coordinators?

The YHCC champions youth health, health equity and facilitates youth engagement as a component of HPS. They work with partners across sectors to ensure youth have access to supports, programs and services within the school and community that promote health.

YHCCs support a healthy school community for all youth by:

- Building strong local relationships and networks with school and community partners to advance HPS.
- Working with youth and schools to ensure youth have a strong sense of ownership over processes and decisions that impact their lives.
- Identifying and advancing policies that will protect and promote youth health and learning.
- Facilitating meaningful and inclusive youth participation and engagement as a core value and striving to embed this within the norms and practices of the school.
- Engaging youth in opportunities to contribute to positive changes in their school and communities.

YHCCs provide coordination of the YHC by:

- Creating safe, welcoming, inclusive YHC spaces that reflect the diversity of the school and community.
- Working with youth and partners to ensure evidence-based programs that support youth health, health education and health literacy are provided. For example, healthy relationships; sexual health; mental health promotion; 2SLGBTQ+ alliances.
- Ensuring youth health resources are made available through the centre, such as: pregnancy tests and condoms.



YHCCs support the health and learning of individual youth by:

- Fostering caring and supportive relationships with youth and striving to be a trusted adult within the school environment.
- Engaging youth in decisions regarding their health and the services or programs they receive.
- Leading with a strengths-based approach to support youth in a manner that is non-judgmental, confidential, and safe.
- Ensuring planning and delivery of youth programs and services is youth-centered and trauma-informed.
- Building strong relationships with school administrators, teachers, SchoolsPlus, guidance, student/youth support workers, Primary Health Care, Mental Health and Addictions and other community partners to ensure youth have access to supports, programs and services within the school and community that promote health.
- Providing youth with navigation to services, programs or resources that will meet their mental, physical, or sexual health needs.
 - *Navigation* includes engaging with individual youth to understand and identify appropriate pathways to care, connecting with community partners to address barriers to access, and supporting a first point of contact between the youth and an identified care or service provider. It does not include health assessment, diagnosis, treatment, counseling, or administering tests.