

Youth Champions Role

What is the Youth Wellness Champions Program?

The Youth Wellness Champions (YWC) Program is a partnership between the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) and public health units across the province of Ontario. The program supports students to become mental health champions in their schools.

The main goals of the YWC Program: To improve the health and wellbeing of youth by promoting mental wellness initiatives, helping to reduce stigma about mental illness and prevent substance use. Health units partner with school boards to identify and implement YWC into interested schools.

How does the program work?

You will be trained and supported to take on the role of “Youth Champion” in your school and will form the Network of Champions.

As a **Youth Champion**, you will work to improve the health and well-being of youth develop the knowledge and skills they need to cope with mental health and substance use issues. Youth will be trained and supported to take on the role of “Youth Champion” at their school and will form the Network of Champions.

The **Youth Champion** will work closely with the **School Staff Lead(s)** (i.e., Child and Youth Worker, teacher), **Mental Health Lead**, **school principal/vice-principal or designate**, and **Youth Champions** to plan and carry out initiatives promoting mental health throughout the school year. Logistics and timing of these activities will be communicated by your local school and the local health unit.

What is the role of a Youth Champion?

The Youth Champion will:

1. Attend a local training session/workshop with other **Youth Champions** within the school/region (date & location TBD) to:
 - learn about the YWC Program and their role as a Youth Champion
 - gain background knowledge and understanding about mental health and addictions, stress and wellness through the use of resources, videos and reflective activities
 - learn about local community resources available to support mental health and wellbeing
2. Respond in a timely manner to emails, texts or other correspondence from the Public Health Lead(s) or School Staff Lead(s).
3. Connect with other youth in your school/community related to the program.
4. Participate in evaluation activities (for example, paper and online surveys, focus groups, activity profiles).

What are the benefits of becoming a Youth Champion?

By being a **Youth Champion**, you will have an opportunity to...

Gain skills in:

- Public speaking
- Communication
- Leadership
- Facilitation

Learn about:

- Mental health and mental illness
- Stigma
- Stress management and coping skills
- Community supports

Gain experiences with:

- Health promotion
- Planning and delivering events/ activities
- Networking and meeting new people