Executive Summary

The developmental period of adolescence has inherent vulnerabilities yet they are the most underrepresented population in annual healthcare office visits. Because unaddressed, high risk behaviors may negatively impact the biophysical and psychosocial wellbeing of the adolescent, connecting with a medical home is essential. Many factors influence adolescent healthcare-seeking behaviors among which are family dynamics and structure, age and maturity, developmental trajectory and provider hesitancy to care for adolescents. When the adolescent’s vulnerabilities have positive supports the outcome is a reasonably adaptive and healthy adult. But, when an adolescent lacks supportive structures that nurture the psychosocial and biophysical determinants of health, high risk behaviors become health risks with socioeconomic and psychosocial implications. An integrative approach that targets adolescent health concerns was lacking within the clinic’s structural network; yet resources to address this special needs population are available within existing organizational structures and can be provided at no additional cost to the organization by realigning and coordinating these resources.

Coordination of a comprehensive adolescent clinic creates a platform to address the biophysical and psychosocial factors that influence adolescent health and increases their access to healthcare. This project intends to target adolescent healthcare needs while minimizing economic impact and to function as a point of connectedness for the adolescent. It is hypothesized, that at conclusion, the adolescent would have increased access to health care, a patient-centered approach is facilitated, and healthcare providers would work more effectively in the adolescent-provider relationship. The theme of the project is “Bring A Friend”, which has as its secondary aim to appeal to the friends of adolescents attending the clinic: generating a public outreach for vulnerable adolescents and their peers.

An internship at another adolescent clinic increased this provider’s ability to facilitate the adolescent health visit in a manner that supports meaningful adolescent-provider participation. The 15-20 minute visit extends up to one hour utilizing nonproductive waiting area time. Providers and triage staff recognize the benefit of the specialty clinic and refer clients. Consistency of the Provider-Medical Assistant team increases efficiency and fosters a sense of connectedness for the adolescent, which in some cases leads to parents leaving the room to facilitate a patient-centered visit. Stressing the implications of confidentiality fosters respect and transparency during the encounter.