



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: YMCA OF THE USA

### Million Hearts® in Action

[ Strategies for Achieving Million Hearts® Goals ]



YMCA of the USA (Y-USA) joined the Million Hearts Collaborative in 2015. With over 10,000 local branches, Y-USA focuses on empowering young people, improving health and well-being and inspiring action in and across communities.

Y-USA uses a community integrated health model to strengthen linkages between traditional healthcare and community-based prevention resources. The purpose of this work is to help individuals prevent, delay, or live better with chronic conditions. YMCAs across the country provide chronic disease prevention programs including the YMCA's Diabetes Prevention Program, Healthy Weight and Your Child, LIVESTRONG at the YMCA, Enhance® Fitness and the Blood Pressure Self-Monitoring (BPSM) Program.

BPSM is a four-month program that teaches participants how to measure and record their blood pressure at home and aims to increase awareness of triggers that elevate blood pressure. Participants receive two personalized consultation sessions with a Healthy Heart Ambassador each month and attend monthly Nutrition Education Seminars throughout the program.

The program is supported (in part) through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As of January 2020, 204 corporate YMCA associations have delivered BPSM across 40 states in various community settings (including non-Y facilities) serving over 7,000 individuals. As the program moves forward, goals include launching programs in additional states and communities; expanding relationships with clinical providers; and establishing bi-directional communication systems that support referrals to and feedback from the program.

### [ Local Examples Provide Tips for Success ]

In 2016, four area YMCA's in the capital city of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania partnered to form a Center for Healthy Living, which offered cancer support programming along with the CDC National Diabetes Prevention Program. In 2017, the Center launched the BPSM program through an established partnership with Penn State Health and has continued to engage area providers through lunch & learn opportunities. The Center has seen a continued increase in referrals to the program through partnerships with a local Federally Qualified Health Center and the State Health Department. Providers are given monthly progress reports on the number of patient consultations, home monitoring data and more. Most importantly, participants are reaping the benefits of education and improved blood pressure measures.

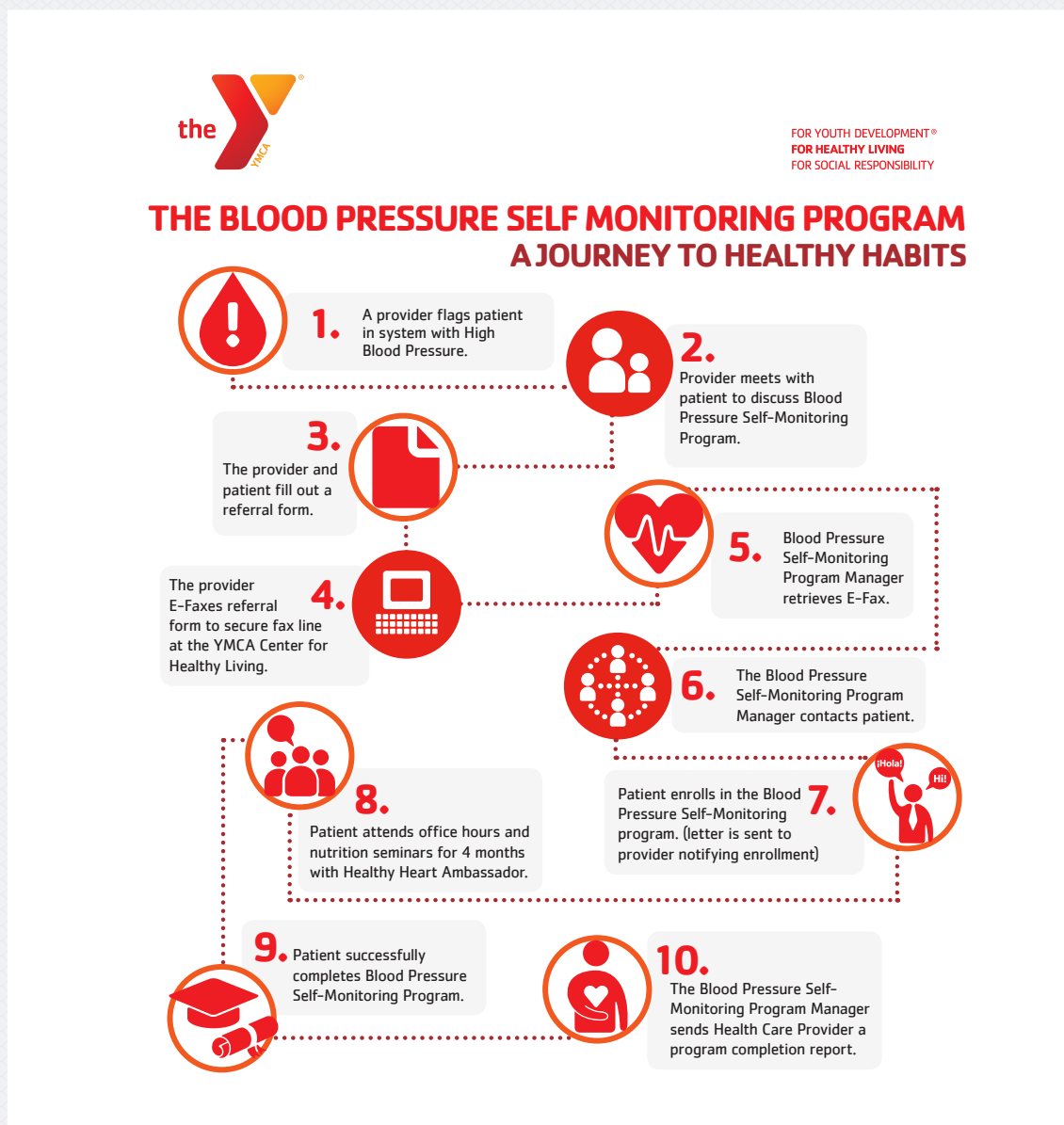
**"This program was an eye-opener. I had not taken my health seriously in the past but realized that high blood pressure is a silent killer! Please do continue to educate more people on this health crisis."**

- Julia, Program Participant

The YMCA of the Suncoast BPSM program is active in a variety of settings in the Tampa Bay area including the county health department, employer groups such as the school district and the local food pantry and a homeless shelter. The YMCA is strategic about serving the needs of the community, having a wide variety of places through which to recruit program participants as well as funding partners.

Both local examples stressed these keys to their success:

- 1) Build on your existing relationships. Talk with Y board members and partners from other existing Y programs for referral leads, marketing and potential funding options.
- 2) Train staff early and often about the program; the YMCA of the Suncoast recently began participant exit interviews for various programs and there were opportunities for overlap and referrals.
- 3) Create a funding matrix to develop diverse funding opportunities so that as one program sunsets another is already in the works.



Y-USA also recently concluded two projects focused on community-clinical linkages. The first was in partnership with the American Heart Association and connected local YMCAs with Target BP clinics to increase referrals to BPSM. The second project was supported by CDC to establish electronic bi-directional communication mechanisms between BPSM providers and their existing clinical partnerships.

The YMCA's BPSM network continues to work intentionally to ensure this program is accessible to those who may most benefit from its components and that they are continuing to meet the needs of all of their community members. This includes exploring third party program coverage, group-based delivery, virtual delivery (especially in the context of COVID-19), and efforts to target populations with disproportionate risk burden.