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Research Synthesis

PREVENTING HIV TRANSMISSION AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN ADOLESCENT GIRLS: SiHLE (SISTERING, INFORMING, HEALING, LIVING AND EMPOWERING)

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The Issue:

African-American women experience HIV/AIDS at disproportionate rates compared to other women in the United States. Culturally-relevant and effective prevention interventions are essential to improving the health and well-being of black women and their families.

Overview:

SiHLE targets sexually active African-American female adolescents, ages 14-18. It is a four-session, four-hour group-level intervention that is based on the Social Learning Theory and the Theory of Gender and Power. A randomly controlled trial of 522 African-American adolescent girls were participants in the original intervention delivered by peer educators recruited from local schools to serve as role models for teens in clinics in Birmingham, Ala.

The purpose of the intervention was/is to lower sexually transmitted diseases among African-American teens, ages 14 to 18, and to enhance skills and mediators of HIV preventive behaviors.

Participants in the original intervention reported using condoms more consistently, were less likely to have a new sex partner in the past 30 days, had fewer episodes of unprotected intercourse, lower incidence of bacterial infections and increased condom application skills.



Session 1:

Session 1 focuses on ethnic and gender pride. Participants discuss the joys and challenges of being an African-American adolescent female, acknowledge the accomplishments of African-American women, read poetry by African-American females and frame artwork created by African-American women artists.

Session 2:

HIV prevention education is the focus of Session 2. HIV risk reduction strategies are discussed, including, abstaining from sex, using condoms consistently and limiting sex partners.

Session 3:

Participants in Session 3 are given sexual communication and condom use skills. This session features role-play, discussions on safer sex, refusing unsafe sex, abstinence, proper consistent condom use and modeling condom skills.

Session 4:

Session 4 emphasizes the importance of healthy relationships.

Lessons Learned:

HIV prevention interventions that are designed to account for gender and cultural differences are found to be more effective and must continue to be developed, implemented and evaluated. This intervention has the capacity to reduce HIV transmission risk behaviors and improve communication and negotiation skills necessary for African-American women to improve their health outcomes.

Source: *Effective HIV Prevention Interventions for African American Women: Four Models* presented by Fuller, T.R.; Brown, M.; King, W.; Carey, A.; and Prather, C. during the 2005 National HIV Prevention Conference, a collaborative effort by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Ga.

For more information, call the **Mississippi Urban Research Center** at: 1-866-JSU-MURC (578-6872).

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