




Girls Holla Back!

Culturally-Specific HIV & Drug Prevention



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Workshop Overview

- History & Description of Girls Holla Back!
- Cultural Aspects of Program Development & Implementation
- Evaluation Results
- Program Sustainability
- Lessons Learned



Girls Holla Back! in the News
June 2008



What is Girls Holla Back!?

Gender and culturally-specific prevention program for African American girls & women that was developed specifically for African Americans by African Americans on the faculty and staff of the Missouri Institute of Mental Health in St. Louis, Missouri.

The project was developed to address the alarming high rate of HIV/AIDS among African American women in the St. Louis metropolitan area. It was originally designed to address both HIV/AIDS and substance abuse.



Impetus for Creation of Girls Holla Back!

- City health director declared an HIV/AIDS public health crisis among African Americans in 1999
- 80% of reported female cases of HIV were among African Americans
- 74% of reported female AIDS cases were among African Americans
- 20% of high school students in Missouri reported having more than 4 lifetime sexual partners



Project History & Description

Girls Holla Back! I

- Faith-based mentoring approach
- Combined HIV and substance abuse prevention
- 10-16 year-old girls and mentors from churches
- 14-week intervention
- 2002-2005
- Funder – Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Girls Holla Back! II

- Intergenerational approach
- Addressed HIV prevention only
- 12-17 year-old girls and their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, or other female family members
- 4-week intervention
- 2005-2008
- Funder – Office on Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



Project History & Description

Girls Holla Back! I

Evidence-based curricula

- *Be Proud! Be Responsible!* HIV prevention by Loretta Sweet Jemmott, Ph.D., RN; John Jemmott; and Konstance McCaffree
- *Creating Lasting Family Connections* substance abuse prevention by Ted N. Strader, MS

Girls Holla Back! II

Evidence-based curricula

- *Be Proud! Be Responsible!*
- *Life Skills Training* by Gilbert Botvin, Ph.D. (used the communications modules)
- *Creating Lasting Family Connections* (used the Getting Real with Communications modules)



Project Goals – Girls Holla Back! I

- Increase girls' knowledge about risks associated with substance use and sexual activity
- Help girls develop resistance skills
- Change favorable attitudes toward or intention to engage in drug use or promiscuous sexual activity



Project Goals – Girls Holla Back! II

- Increase knowledge of youth and adults about HIV, its causes, and how to prevent it
- Increase communication about sex and health between adult participants and the youth they care for
- Increase comfort with intergenerational communication



Our Vision & Mission

A caring community that actively advocates for the health of African American families by addressing the threat of HIV/AIDS and increasing communication among family members



Our Hope

That African American females take responsibility for their own health and wellness and that communication about sexual health between the generations is strengthened



Project Recognition

2004 – recognized as innovative program by the African American AIDS Alliance of Missouri's Emergency Response Plan to HIV/AIDS in the African American Community and the Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS Planning Committee



Project Recognition

2004 – Missouri Senate resolution recognized program as an “exciting initiative that has been instrumental in educating the state’s young people in the prevention of substance abuse and HIV/AIDS”

2005 – What’s Right with the Region Award from Focus St. Louis

2007 – Community Champions Award from Institute for Family Medicine



Cultural Aspects of Program Development & Implementation

- Developed for African Americans by African Americans
- Used information from focus groups from target population
- Established Junior Advisory Council
- Formed and maintained Steering Committee
- Hired African American female facilitators
- Provided on-site African American therapist



Cultural Aspects of Program Development & Implementation

- Established procedure for selection of mentors from churches that respected church culture
- Involved the faith community
- Used radio to promote the program
- Developed culturally-appealing project materials
- Developed cultural competency plan

Hip-Hop Dance Lessons for Participants





Cultural Aspects of Program Development & Implementation

- Provided culturally competency training for staff and Steering Committee
- Involved African American female legislators
- Incorporated cultural bonding activities in intervention
- Adopted culturally-appropriate description of what constitutes family

African Dance Lessons for Participants





Evaluation Design

- Single-group, repeated measures (“pre-post”) design
Baseline (“Pre-test”), Post-test at “Exit” (immediately after program)
- Self-report measures
Questionnaire, with items adopted from existing measures



Evaluation Results

- Significant increase in knowledge about HIV and self-efficacy for youth in Girls Holla Back! I.
- Significant increase in knowledge about HIV for youth in Girls Holla Back! II.
- Significant increase in comfort with intergenerational communication for youth and adults in Girls Holla Back! II.
- Bonding with mentors associated with better outcomes on self-efficacy and risk behavior (Girls Holla Back! I).
- No significant change in frequency of communication about sex and health between adults and the youth in their households in Girls Holla Back! II.



Program Sustainability

- Served over 300 participants in six cohorts through federal grants
- In 2008 received small non-federal grants to train churches to implement the intergenerational model (Girls Holla Back! II)
- Awarded 5 mini-grants (\$2,500) to churches in August 2008 to implement project



Program Sustainability

- Developed a train-the-facilitator training for churches through one of community partners - Committed Caring Faith Communities
- Submitted proposals for funding to train churches in the other major metropolitan area of the state – Kansas City, MO



Lessons Learned

- Intergenerational approach was more challenging to implement than faith-based mentoring approach
- Drawback of the faith-based mentoring approach was absence of parent participation
- Condom skills building segment of curriculum was issue with some churches



Lessons Learned

- Radio was most effective means of recruiting participants
- Involvement of target population in program design and implementation proved most beneficial
- Involvement of community partners, including faith community, was critical



Lessons Learned

- Community pushed for inclusion of a parallel program for boys and men
- Some professionals had a perception that girls who are in church aren't having sex
- Having a catchy program name that was selected by the target population proved invaluable
- Incorporating fun cultural and communication activities helped with retention



Lessons Learned

- Incentives for participation helped with attendance (baby-sitting, transportation, meals, door prizes)
- Relationship-building was essential to the engagement and retention of program participants (newsletters, phone calls, birthday cards)
- Providing leadership opportunities for girls who completed the program helped to reinforce their learning



Future Plans for Girls Holla Back!

- Recently received another three-year federal grant from Office on Women's Health for the intergenerational approach
- Awaiting approval of 8 pending proposals to foundations for additional funding to train churches to implement the intergenerational approach
- Encouraging churches to adapt the program for males



Future Plans for Girls Holla Back!

- Discussing possibility of developing advanced Girls Holla Back! program for participants who completed the program and want to return
- Exploring offering the program in other parts of the state, including rural areas and in neighboring cities in Illinois



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- Junior Advisory Council



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