University of Bridgeport: A Collaborative Leader in Mitigating HIV Transmission and Substance Abuse In Young Adults

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Odyssey Project
HIV & Substance Abuse

The Odyssey Project is a 5 year (1.5 million dollar) grant awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association of the federal government (SAMHSA). The project is designed to mitigate the transmission of HIV and substance abuse among young adults living on campus and in the Bridgeport community. There has been extensive research demonstrating that risky behaviors such as unsafe sexual activity are inextricably linked with alcohol and drug abuse. Our project is designed to mitigate both of these important social problems in our community.

Rationale

- In 2007, 571,378 people were living with HIV/AIDS in U.S.
- African Americans account for 50% of new HIV infections.
- In 2007, 1,703 HIV infections reported among 15-19 years old, 4,907 among 20 – 24 years old.
- Among persons 13-24 age range, African Americans account for 55% of all HIV infections.
- Among women 13-24 age range, African Americas & Hispanic females account for over 75% of all HIV infections.
- In 2006, rates of overall substance abuse treatment for CT individuals in 18-25 age range were among the highest in the country (between 8.61% to 11.81%) and for alcohol use were between 20.51% to 24.78.

Objectives

- Reduce the onset of substance abuse and transmission of HIV among students on campus.
- Increase community involvement in substance abuse and HIV prevention.
- Reduce the psychological and social barriers to early diagnosis of HIV.
- Engage high risk minority young adults in group level interventions.
- Refer all program participants identified with issues of substance abuse, mental health and/or healthcare to appropriate agencies for treatment services.
- Engage in research to test the effectiveness of various awareness and educational strategies.

Collaborators

UB
Bridgeport Health Department
Greater Bridgeport Adolescent Pregnancy Program
Bridgeport United Coalition Workgroup
Federal Government & grant

Anticipated Results of the Grant

Awareness
- We will reach over 2,000 students annually via posters, outreach, web based communication and social marketing efforts.

Counseling/Testing
- We will test 450 minority young adults in the age range of 18-24 years old.

Education
- We will engage a minimum of 400 students in sessions of HIV and Substance Abuse (SA) prevention education in a classroom setting.
- We will complete initial and exit surveys on our educational strategy and collect demographic data on the participants.

Referral
- We will refer 100% of young adults identified needing treatment to appropriate agencies and health care facilities.

Research
- We will engage an unbiased, external measurement specialist to determine the effectiveness of our educational strategy compared to standard curriculum in HIV/Substance Abuse (SA).
- We will contribute to the body of knowledge in health psychology on the relationship between awareness, attitudes and actual behavioral change.

Project Outcomes

- Short term – Reduced alcohol/drug use norms, increased use of safe sex practices.
- Long term – Reduced HIV infections reported due to preventive measures, reduced alcohol/substance abuse among young adults, contribute to the body of knowledge in health health psychology.
- Attitudes – Increased knowledge and awareness of risk factors related to HIV transmissions in Substance Abuse (SA) and HIV prevention.
- Behavioral – Reduced Substance Abuse (SA) among students, reduced amounts of alcohol consumed by students, increased use of protective behaviors among students.
- Community – Increased reporting of HIV infection expected in the young adult population in Bridgeport, increased percentage of young adults receiving medical care for their HIV, increased number of alcohol outlets, decreased number of Substance Abuse (SA) related calls during university events, increased percentage of young adults receiving specialized substance abuse treatment.