

From Jail to Peer Counselor: HIV Educator Training Increases HIV Testing

Skye Ross, LMSW, MPH (sdr2132@cumc.columbia.edu)

Alison Jordan, LCSW (ajordan@nychhc.org)

Randi Sinnreich, LMSW (rsinnreich@nychhc.org)

Allison Dansby, LMSW (adansby@nychhc.org)

Issues: Incarcerated men face heightened risk for HIV infection, which is mediated by knowledge and behavior. This population is at greater risk for disease progression than is the general HIV patient population. HIV testing and counseling engages individuals in prevention and care. **Description:** This program evaluation was conducted to assess whether participation in a peer educator training program increases knowledge and testing behavior among people who are incarcerated. HIV Prevention Peer Educator Training with "Teachable Moments" combined the HIV Prevention and Counseling curriculum (HIV 101) with the HIV Prevention Train the Trainer curriculum developed by a large, urban, local health agency. Data from 3 training cycles were used, yielding a sample of 96 participants. **Lessons learned:** Peer educator trainees reported 11,756 teachable moments with peers detained in jail. Significantly more peer educator training participants consented to HIV testing compared to the system-wide average jail population (56.25% compared to 25.23% of the jail population; $\chi^2= 48.164$, $df=1$, $p<.01$). The increased rate of testing among program participants is evidence of increased HIV knowledge and awareness among a population at high risk of HIV. "Teachable moments" were shown to be an accessible tool in disseminating information peer-to-peer. **Recommendations:** While this evaluation demonstrated a preliminary link between learning and behavior among at-risk incarcerated men, future study with other populations is warranted. Further evaluation may focus on other benefits to peer educators, such as related employment in the community, and the impact of the impressive number of teachable moments.

References:

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