

Improving School-Based Health Care Practice

Quality Improvement Collaborative Series

Helping Adolescents Avoid STD/HIV Risk

“The nurse practitioners had been feeling disheartened, because despite their education efforts, a student would return with an STD several times. But stage-based counseling shows that they can make a difference—on condom use or abstinence, they can move someone from ‘never’ to ‘maybe.’ That’s progress—and that’s measurable.”

--Collaborative faculty

Health care professionals, including those who work in schools, often feel that HIV pretest counseling, theory-based prevention counseling, and group prevention activities are too time-consuming and unlikely to yield positive

results. The STD/HIV prevention collaborative was designed to change those preconceived notions by engaging SBHCs as effective partners in school and community-based prevention efforts.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

School-based health centers will improve the delivery of STD/HIV prevention, counseling and testing by:

- Establishing group health education and skill-building modalities to foster abstinence and avoidance of risk-taking behaviors among SBHC users
- Improving individual guidance and counseling skills around STD/HIV prevention, testing, and risk avoidance
- Organizing school-wide social marketing campaigns to promote abstinence and the avoidance of sexual risk taking behaviors

CORE CONTENT AREAS

We organized the STD/HIV prevention learning content around the following areas:

- **Rapid HIV pretest counseling**, an alternative to traditional HIV counseling, testing, and referral, and best practice advanced by the Adolescents AIDS Program at Montefiore Children’s Hospital, in which every interaction with a sexually active adolescent is regarded as an opportunity to identify, teach, test, and prevent HIV.
- **Application of social marketing concepts** to improve quality of SBHC STD/HIV prevention, outreach, and intervention strategies.
- **Stage-based STD/HIV behavioral counseling**, a technique that in 15 to 20 minute session allows providers to gauge student readiness for behavior change at any point on a five-stage continuum.
- **Group STD/HIV prevention activities** employing one of three curricula that have documented evidence of effectively influencing behavior change: Be Proud Be Responsible, Making Proud Choices, and Making a Difference.

IMPACT

- HIV test administration increased from 34% to 45%.
- More SBHCs offered pretest counseling - up by 28%
- The percentage of students who opted to receive pre-test counseling increased from 29% at baseline to 58%
- The use of stage-based counseling increased by 12%
- Sites also improved their SBHC marketing and gained increased support from school systems; teacher referrals have improved after every marketing project

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STRATEGIES & METHODS

Keep training and curricula flexible

- Use evidence-based curricula to find methods and tools that work for your site.

Make it easier to implement group activities

- Try a lunchtime strategy; provide food to encourage attendance in group prevention activities.

Foster a better understanding of confidentiality

- Create consent forms in several different languages
- Use language translation services to better serve students.

Leverage all change models for maximum effectiveness

- Explore the versatility of the stage-based counseling model beyond STD/HIV prevention.
- Address obesity and other risk factors using similar strategies employed with STD/HIV risk reduction.