

The Mpowerment Project:

Putting Community-Level HIV Prevention Research into Practice

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Project Staff: Susan Kegeles, Greg Rebchook, David Sweeney, John Hamiga, Ben Zovod, Scott Tebbetts, Lance Pollack, Dave Huebner, Wayne Steward.

Project Description: This project is part of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Translating Research into Practice (TRIP). We have developed a state-of-the-art, collaborative *technology exchange system* to help CBOs put the Mpowerment Project into practice in their communities. The Mpowerment Project Technology Exchange System (MPTES) is based on proven scientific principles including Diffusion of Innovations and Social Learning Theories. The MPTES includes: 1) a Replication Package consisting of two training manuals and two video tapes; 2) a 3-day comprehensive training program and on-site, follow-up trainings; 3) a technical assistance program; 4) a variety of Internet services including a website, chat rooms, and a listserv.

The Mpowerment Project was designed to reduce the frequency of HIV risk behaviors among young gay/bisexual men, ages 18-29, by mobilizing them to support each other about safer sex. It meets the CDC's Prevention Research Synthesis project criteria and is listed in the *Compendium of HIV Prevention Interventions with Evidence of Effectiveness*.

Interesting findings: Over 300 community-based organizations and health departments (CBOs/HDs) have requested assistance in implementing Mpowerment. The intervention is complex -- it is theoretically sophisticated, involves multiple interrelated components, requires empowering young MSM as decision-makers and uses community-organizing methods. But current theories about MSM and sexual risk behavior indicate that complex interventions are required to match the complex sociocultural contexts of sexual behavior and psychosocial issues affecting young MSM. We found that replication materials alone were insufficient to effectively translate research to practice. Yet replication materials must provide abundant examples of implementation and guidelines to follow, while not dictating exactly how to implement the program. Training must be intensive and experiential, and involve CBOs/HDs sharing their experiences with each other. TA must be individually-tailored to the CBOs/HDs' unique characteristics, communities and stage of implementation. Also, it must be provided on a regular basis, not solely when CBOs/HDs recognize the need for it. Organizational issues must be taken into account in replication materials, training, and TA.

Effectively translating the evidence-based, community-level MP into practice requires a "second generation intervention," focused on CBOs/HDs that want to implement the Mpowerment Project. This new intervention is called The Mpowerment Project Technology Exchange System, (MPTES) and involves extensive collaboration with CBOs/HDs. In addition to replication materials, training and TA, it also involves a website, an internet chat room about the intervention and an electronic discussion group. (Kegeles SM, Rebchook G. Translating Research into Practice: Experiences of an Evidence-Based Community-Level HIV Prevention Intervention for Young MSM. National HIV Prevention Conference. 2003;abstract no. M1-D0202.)

Project Web Site: www.Mpowerment.org

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