

Intervention for African American MSM Who Do Not Identify as Gay

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Project Description: Creating effective HIV interventions for African American men who have sex with men (MSM) is among the most urgent priorities for the public health community. Among those at highest risk for HIV are African American MSM who do not identify as gay or bisexual. Through formative research and input from members of this group and community gatekeepers, this project will develop a culturally and gender-appropriate intervention tailored to the needs of these men. The study will compare an enhanced HIV intervention, which involves HIV counseling and testing plus a series of individual health promotion counseling sessions, relative to a standard program involving HIV counseling, testing and referral to general case management services.

The enhanced health promotion counseling sessions will address:

- 1) increasing comfort with one's personal identity,
- 2) establishing positive relationships, and
- 3) building adaptive life skills.

A sample of 200 African American MSM who do not identify as gay or bisexual will be recruited from the San Francisco Bay Area. After receiving HIV counseling and testing, half will be randomly assigned to the enhanced intervention condition and half randomly assigned to the standard program. All participants will complete baseline, 3-month, and 6-month follow-up behavioral risk assessments using an audio computer-assisted interview. A subset of participants will also complete post-intervention qualitative interviews to provide in-depth experiential insight into the intervention process. Through outcome and process evaluation we will measure and describe behavioral differences associated with the enhanced intervention, as well as develop plans for a larger-scale randomized control HIV intervention trial for this group of men.

This work is a collaboration between the California Prevention and Education Project (CalPEP) in Oakland, CA and CAPS. Our team works out of a shared understanding that service providers, researchers, and community members must work together to create solutions that can mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS in the African American community.

Significance: African American men who have sex with men (MSM) have been highly impacted by HIV, with reports showing disproportionate levels of HIV infection, HIV-related illnesses, and mortality rates due to AIDS among these men. Several research studies indicate that many African American MSM do not identify themselves as gay or bisexual, and consequently may not perceive themselves at risk for HIV, undergo HIV testing, utilize HIV prevention services, or disclose their sexual behaviors to others.

Project End Date: 2008