Spotlight on...TWISTA

Trans-Women Informing Sista Trans-Women on Topics of AIDS (TWISTA) is a SISTA adaptation from the Broadway Youth Center (BYC) in Chicago, Illinois. TWISTA is open to youth between the ages of 16-24 who self-identify as transgender women of color (including genderqueer and genderfluid identities).

The SISTA (Sistas Informing Sistas about Topics on AIDS) Project is a social-skills training intervention for African American women ages 18-29. It is comprised of five 2-hour sessions, delivered by peer facilitators in a community-based setting. SISTA sessions are gender specific and culturally relevant.

In the TWISTA adaptation, there are six 2 1/2 hour sessions that occur over 3 weeks. TWISTA sessions originally occurred weekly over a six week period, however this model did not work with BYC’s target population of marginally housed, “high risk” young transgender women of color. The programming was adapted to a 3 week series, with bi-weekly meetings.

The TWISTA curriculum includes transgender and ethnic pride, HIV/AIDS education (with an emphasis on risk factors for transgender women of color), safer transitions, assertiveness skills training, coping, and a review/peer teach-back session.

The TWISTA program recently finished its second cycle. Nine young transwomen of color entered the program and ALL nine people graduated!!! Their upcoming graduation party will celebrate the success achieved by the participants.

TWISTA has been a beautiful, inspirational community building program that surpassed all expectations by the staff at the Broadway Youth Center.

For more information about TWISTA, email Nicole Perez at nicolep@howardbrown.org or visit www.howardbrown.org

Transgender Affinity Session

At the 2008 HIV Prevention Leadership Summit (HPLS)

June 11th at HPLS will feature an affinity workshop dedicated to transgender adaptations of evidence based interventions!

The Transitions Project is currently hosting monthly conference calls to plan this affinity session. The monthly conference calls also provide a forum for agencies implementing transgender adaptations to share their successes, challenges, and support each other. Our next conference call will occur on May 22nd at 10am (PDT).

Agenda items for the June 11th HPLS Transgender Affinity Session include: challenges and differences in trans communities, creating culturally competent adaptations, staff retention, obtaining community buy-in for the interventions, how to work effectively with collaborations across multiple agencies, participant recruitment and more!

We will feature several agencies in “spotlight” presentations where they describe how they have overcome challenges of implementing adaptations.

If you’re interested in being involved, contact Luis Gutierrez-Mock at logan.mock@ucsf.edu.
Upcoming HIV/AIDS Awareness Days

**National HIV Vaccine Awareness Day**
**May 18th, 2008**

This awareness day is meant to provide a great opportunity to thank the thousands of people who are working to help find an HIV preventive vaccine—clinical trial volunteers, nurses, community educators/recruiters, and researchers.

To learn why thousands of individuals across the country will be wearing their red AIDS ribbons upside down on May 18, and what you can do to participate in Vaccine Awareness Day (HVAD), visit the HVAD Web site:


**National Asian and Pacific Islander (API) HIV/AIDS Awareness Day**
**May 19th, 2008**

This awareness day intends to raise awareness among Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S. about the impact of HIV/AIDS.

This awareness day is part of the Banyan Tree Project (a national campaign to fight HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination in A&PI communities). For more information, please visit www.banyantreeproject.org

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Introducing Luis Gutierrez-Mock*

The Transitions team is excited to announce our newest Capacity Building Assistance Specialist, Luis Gutierrez-Mock. Luis is a biracial, queer female to male transgender person who has worked in HIV prevention since 2000. He holds a Master's Degree in Human Sexuality Studies and will receive his second Master's Degree in Ethnic Studies in the fall of 2008. His personal research focuses on queer people of mixed race, and HIV prevalence within multiracial populations.

Luis previously worked as the primary case manager at Bay Area Young Positives, the world's first peer-based HIV/AIDS youth agency.

Luis sits on the board of directors of Interracial Family Pride, an agency serving mixed heritage and transracially adopted youth and their families. The founder of Mixed Fruit Productions, Luis curates events featuring mixed race LGBTQ performers.

In his free time he volunteers at Bay Area Young Positives, Community United Against Violence, and Swirl Bay Area. He believes that for true liberation we have to fight all oppressions; preferably while wearing pink!

A self-identified mama’s boy, Luis is super excited that his parents recently renamed him! His new name is Luis Ronaldo Gutierrez-Mock! He feels incredibly blessed to have a family that accepts him as a transgender male.

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Community Alert

The Transitions Project is deeply saddened by the recent rise in murders of transgender and gender non-conforming youth of color across the US. Our heartfelt sorry goes out to the friends and family of Adolphus Simmons, Senesha Stewart, Lawrence King, and Beyonce Williams.

Materials and information that address violence against transgender women of color can be incorporated into the transgender adaptations for evidence-based interventions. Interventions can be tailored to include topics like: stayin safe on the streets, know your rights with the police, self defense without breaking a nail, etc. Contact the Transitions Project for more information on how to incorporate this type of information into your intervention curriculum.
The Transitions Project provides technical assistance to agencies using Diffusion of Effective Behavioral Interventions (DEBI’s) to reduce the spread of HIV and STD’s within transgender communities. The interventions include the Mpowerment Project, SISTA (Sista’s Informing Sista’s about Topics on AIDS), and Healthy Relationships. Research shows that when DEBI’s are used with fidelity (meaning that all of the core elements are in place), positive behavior and health changes occur (such as increased condom use).

Dr. Dean Fixsen, a specialist in development and national implementation of evidence-based programs from the University of South Florida, recently visited the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at UCSF. Dr. Fixsen provided us with an overview of how to make research-based interventions work within specific populations and agencies.

What makes a program successful? Dr. Fixsen’s research show that programs with higher fidelity have better outcomes. This means that when agencies really follow the core elements of an intervention, the intervention will work better. Dr. Fixsen suggested the following steps to use in achieving high fidelity to the core elements:

1. **Selection**: Agencies should choose the intervention that will work best with the communities they serve. We urge agencies to fill out the agency assessment forms for particular interventions before deciding which intervention to use. Agency assessment forms for all of the DEBI’s can be found online at: www.effectiveinterventions.org

2. **Staff Selection**: This is a critical aspect of ensuring a program’s success. Each transgender evidence based intervention requires the use of “peers” as facilitators/coordinators. For interventions targeting transgender women of color, staff selection should involve hiring from within that peer group.

3. **Trainings**: The purpose of staff trainings are to change behaviors. Dr. Fixsen’s research found that while trainings are an important component to successful interventions, trainings alone do not work. Just sending the program coordinators to an Mpowerment or SISTA training is not enough to ensure that your program will be successful. Trainings can only be successful if the appropriate intervention is chosen, if the appropriate staff are hired, if staff are receiving effective feedback, and if programs are evaluated correctly.

4. **Coaching**: Coaching is different than supervision, although it may be provided by a supervisor. Coaching involves giving positive feedback and analyzing how a program can be changed to become more successful. Coaching should be accompanied by a training on how to give and receive feedback. The CBA providers at the Transitions Project accomplish coaching through site visits, phone calls, and emails.

5. **Performance Evaluation**: These should focus on fidelity to the program. For Mpowerment Project adaptations, download the Mpowerment Project evaluation forms from: www.mpowerment.org SISTA fidelity process forms are located on the effective interventions website: www.effectiveinterventions.org For Healthy Relationships visit: www.effectiveinterventions.org

This five step process does not end with the completion of the performance evaluation. The performance evaluation should loop back into the other stages so that changes can be made to make the program more successful.


Where will the Transitions Team be next?

**2008 Center for AIDS Prevention Studies Conference: New Directions in HIV Prevention**
Friday, April 18, 8 am - 5 pm
www.caps.ucsf.edu/conference

This conference will feature workshops by our scientists and community collaborators that promote an exchange of ideas about current HIV prevention issues.

**HIV Prevention Leadership Summit**
June 11th—14th, 2008
www.2008hpls.org

Join the Transitions Project team, agencies adapting HIV interventions for transgender populations, and CDC Project Officers at this year’s HPLS! The affinity workshop on June 11th will address the unique challenges and successes of implementing transgender EBI adaptations.
The Transitions Project provides capacity building assistance (CBA) and technical assistance to community based organizations (CBOs) and health departments throughout the US to promote knowledgeable, sensitive, and effective HIV/AIDS prevention for transgender communities of color and HIV+ transgender people. This CDC-funded capacity building project is the first of its kind to address the HIV prevention needs of transgender communities. Estimates of HIV prevalence among transgender women, especially transgender women of color, have been the highest for any risk group in the US.

The Transitions Team is available for consultation, training, capacity-building and technical assistance throughout the United States. Please let us know what we can do to assist your organization to effectively address the needs of trans and gender variant persons in your community.

The Transitions Project is a program of the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at the University of California, San Francisco.

The Transitions Project is Hiring!

The Transitions Project at the University of California, San Francisco is hiring a new Capacity Building Assistance Specialist. This position requires a dynamic person who is extremely involved in the trans community, with particular emphasis on young transwomen of color. We’re looking for someone who is knowledgeable about HIV prevention and evidence based HIV prevention interventions (such as Mpowerment, SISTA, and Healthy Relationships: http://effectiveinterventions.org). In addition, our ideal candidate is familiar with how community based organizations operate, and has the savvy and political acumen to work within their structures to help them implement interventions for their local trans community. This project has the potential to have tremendous positive impact by increasing the capacity of a broad range of organizations around the nation to provide solid, appropriate HIV interventions to young transwomen of color.

The Capacity Building Assistance Specialist is a full-time position based in San Francisco, California. The candidate will be part of a team that will help organizations adapt and implement evidence based interventions (EBI) specifically for transgender people; particularly young transwomen of color.

We are an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. We encourage people of color, women, trans and gender non-conforming people, people living with HIV, and individuals of diverse backgrounds to apply.