SISTA, Are You Down with the “T”?

Adapting SISTA for Transgender Populations

The Transitions Project - University of California San Francisco / Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS)
Capacity Building Assistance to Improve the Delivery and Effectiveness of HIV Prevention for High-Risk Racial/Ethnic Minority Subpopulations CDC AWARD #: U65/CCU924898
Initially, The Transitions Project wanted to create a SISTA (Sisters Informing Sisters About Topics on AIDS) adaptation for transgender women of color, but:

- We realized that in order for an adaptation to be successful, it must be unique & a “one size fits all adaptation” is not beneficial to any agency.
SISTA is a Good Choice

- An intervention that addresses issues of great importance for all women (both trans & non-trans).

✓ Addresses ways that sexism & racism lead to HIV risk.

✓ Builds:
  - Pride in being a woman of color, which can be expanded to include pride in being a transwoman of color.
  - Skills for engaging in safer sex with partners.
  - Verbal and nonverbal communication skills.
  - Confidence in the ability to have safer sex.
  - A sense of community.
What’s Missing?

► SISTA can be adapted to meet the unique needs and HIV risk behaviors of transwomen of color, but what are some of the things it is missing?

✓ Establishing transgender cultural competency.

✓ Needle sharing.
  - Safe injection hormone use.
  - Safe injection silicone use.

✓ Validating gender identity through sex.
  - Participants engage in risky survival sex work.
  - May not have a steady boyfriend or primary partner.
Session 1-Ethnic/Gender Pride

► Original Goal:

✓ Generate a discussion about being African-American and female, having pride in oneself, and valuing oneself.

► T-SISTA Adaptation:

✓ Discusses the importance of self-love, pride, and the positive qualities of being transgender women of color.
Session 2-HIV/AIDS Education

► Original Goal:

✓ Provide information on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), correct misconceptions about HIV/AIDS, and discuss the importance of protecting oneself.

► T-SISTA Adaptation:

✓ Provide participants with basic information on HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and their relationship to sex and drugs.
Session 3-Assertiveness Skills Training

► Original Goal:
  √ Teach the distinction between assertive, aggressive and non-assertive behaviors and teach skills to begin assertive qualities.

► T-SISTA Adaptation:
  √ Focuses on effective communication and sexual negotiation skills.
  √ The assertiveness training should reflect the cultural beliefs of the transwomen of color.
Session 4-Behavioral Self-Management

► Original Goal:
- Decrease participants' anxiety about condom use, demonstrate and role-play how to use condoms and discuss reasons why women do not insist upon condom usage.

► T-SISTA Adaptation:
- Tailor the exercise around correct condom usage skills for phallic women, being careful to not make assumptions about participant’s sexual.
Session 5-Coping Skills

► Original Goal:
  ✓ Coping with life experiences -- understanding the link between alcohol and AIDS, coping with alcohol and sex, and coping with negative responses.

► T-SISTA Adaptation:
  ✓ Coping with rejection and negative experiences around transphobia & how alcohol and drugs affect safer sex behaviors.
Being Down With the “T”
(Build It and They Might Come)

► Invest in trans communities.
  ✓ Establish a Community Advisory Board (CAB)
  ✓ Hire trans people throughout the agency, to include the Executive Board.
  ✓ Provide training to both trans and non-trans employees.

► Thoroughly understand SISTA by attending the SISTA training. Info can be found at:
  ✓ http://www.effectiveinterventions.org/
In the community assessment, the needs and wants were stated; allow the data to inform the adaptation.

Utilize the free capacity building & technical assistance.

- Build into your adaptation time to work with CBA providers.
- Email: transitions@ucsf.edu
- http://caps.ucsf.edu/projects/Transitions