

# *Nursing Schools in Partnership with CBOs for HIV Prevention: The SAMHSA MSI-CBO Initiative*

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that while youth and young adults ages 15 to 24 years make up just more than one-quarter of the sexually active population, they account for half of the 20 million new sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that occur in the United States each year (CDC, 2017a). The presence of an STI increases the risk of acquiring HIV (CDC, 2017b). In 2015, youth and young adults ages 13 to 24 years accounted for 22% of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States. Most of those new diagnoses among youth (81%) occurred among gay and bisexual males. Although estimated annual HIV infections fell 18% among young gay and bisexual males from 2008 to 2014, young Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino gay and bisexual males continue to be disproportionately affected (CDC, 2017a).

College students 18 to 24 years of age are at risk for HIV due to multiple partners, inconsistent use of condoms, and having sex while under the influence of alcohol and other substances (Abbey, Parkhill, Buck, & Saenz, 2007; Wu, Ringwalt, Patkar, Hubbard, & Blazer, 2009). A review of the literature revealed that college students do not perceive themselves to be at risk for HIV, have low rates of HIV testing, and have inadequate knowledge regarding HIV transmission (Lewis, Marguez-Burbano, & Malow, 2009). Results of a

study of Hispanic male college students showed that almost 50% of the participants were involved in some form of high-risk sexual practice such as having multiple sex partners, holding apathetic views on condom use, self-reporting low rates of HIV testing, having incorrect knowledge of STI transmission, and holding misconceptions about HIV (Fenkl, Jones, & Orta, 2016). Therefore, campus-based programs to increase HIV testing and knowledge among young adult college students are needed. Partnering with HIV prevention community-based organizations (CBOs) is one strategy to meet this need.

The purpose of this Program Brief is to describe the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Minority-Serving Institution Community-Based Organization (MSI-CBO) initiative and to discuss how two schools of nursing are participating in this initiative by partnering with CBOs to provide HIV and substance abuse prevention education to students on their campuses.

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## **SAMHSA MSI-CBO Grant Initiative**

In 2013, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention developed an HIV prevention initiative focused on collaboration between minority-serving institutions (MSIs) of higher education and CBOs. The purpose of the program was to prevent and reduce substance abuse and transmission of HIV in African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Natives young adult (ages 18-24 years) populations. Because of the initial success of the MSI-CBO initiative, additional requests for proposals were solicited in 2014 and 2015. The initiative was expanded to include hepatitis testing and to also include MSIs for Asian American/Pacific Islander young adult (ages 18-24 years) populations.

### **Florida International University (FIU) and Latinos Salud**

In 2013, nursing faculty from the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences at FIU were awarded an MSI-CBO grant. FIU is an urban, public, multi-campus research university located in Miami and serving South Florida. FIU is a federally accredited minority-serving university and is designated as a Hispanic-serving institution of higher education. The FIU student body is a microcosm of the diverse Miami community, with more than three-quarters of student enrollment from minority groups: 60% Hispanic, 12% Black, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 7% from other minorities.

Undergraduate nursing students were recruited to assist with the SAMHSA grant as student peer educators for the Student Awareness of the Link between Substance abuse and AIDS (SALSA) project. SALSA students worked with nursing faculty to provide campus-wide HIV and substance abuse awareness events for the general student population. The effectiveness of nursing students in the role of campus-based HIV prevention peer educators has been previously reported ([Jones et al., 2017](#)). Nursing students serving as campus-based HIV prevention student peer educators taught a 50-minute HIV prevention class to freshman students. Results revealed that the freshman students increased knowledge/

awareness of HIV transmission/prevention, while decreasing the likelihood to engage in risky sex.

A review of community epidemiologic data revealed a high community HIV prevalence rate and high rates of new cases of HIV infection in young minority men who have sex with men (YMSM). As part of initial steps in the MSI-CBO program development, a campus-based needs assessment was conducted in 2014 with a specific focus on surveying lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students. The sample included 253 self-identified LGBTQ participants. The needs assessment showed inadequate HIV/STI transmission knowledge, high rates of risky sexual behaviors, and low rates of HIV testing, thus confirming anecdotal assumptions that YMSM were a population on campus that had specific unmet needs with regard to HIV prevention and testing. A CBO that focused on HIV prevention and testing for YMSM, *Latinos Salud*, was selected as a collaborating partner for the MSI-CBO grant.

*Latinos Salud* is Florida's largest multi-cultural, 501(c)(3) CBO focusing on gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer minorities. *Latinos Salud* was founded in 2008 to create a safe space for Latino gay men and their partners to find friends, support, and resources. The mission of *Latinos Salud* is to provide prevention, education, care, and testing services to the minority gay communities of Miami-Dade and Broward Counties and reduce the impact of HIV. *Latinos Salud* offers free community-based rapid HIV testing, sexually transmitted disease testing (syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia), and hepatitis C testing in Broward County, in their Miami Beach office and in their mobile van. *Latinos Salud* also offers several programs that focus on the needs of minorities and men who have sex with men, such as private, one-on-one life coaching sessions and linkage to care for those living with HIV. The programs offered by *Latinos Salud* provide gay men with the skills needed to prevent HIV infection or to live healthier with HIV. *Latinos Salud* brought a wealth of community experience and minority prevention expertise to this project.

Working with staff at *Latinos Salud*, the decision was made to implement the Mpowerment Project at FIU. The Mpowerment Project is an evidence-based HIV prevention program, recognized by the CDC

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