

P3 Primary Prevention for Positives

If every new HIV infection involves an HIV+ person, why do most prevention programs only target HIV- persons? In the Fall of 2000, AIDS Partnership California (APC) launched the Primary Prevention for People of Color Initiative (P3). During the Initiative, APC has awarded eight grants to conduct formative research on what people of color want and need in an HIV prevention program. APC has also funded six HIV prevention programs based on formative research findings. Because little is known about the prevention needs of people with HIV, conducting formative research is key to developing interventions that are effective, culturally competent, and welcomed by the community served.

HIV+ African American and Latina heterosexual women

East Los Angeles Women's Center
Harbor Community Health Center
Los Angeles, CA

Target audience

The East Los Angeles Women's Center (ELAWC) and the Harbor Community Health Center (HCHC) serve women in South Central Los Angeles, one of the most isolated areas of Los Angeles

County. The P3 project "HIV Positive Women of Color Project" focused on heterosexual HIV+ African American and Latina women who were not accessing HIV/AIDS treatment.

Why African American and Latina heterosexual women?

- Among women with AIDS in LA County, 38% are African American and 36% Latina.
- In LA County, the main mode of HIV transmission among African American and Latina women is heterosexual sex.

- Half of HIV+ African American and Latina women in LA County do not know how they were infected. For African Americans, 49% reported unknown risk and for Latinas, 57% reported unknown risk.

Risk behaviors identified through formative research

During the formative research phase, ELAWC and HCHC, in conjunction with Quantica, a private consulting firm, conducted focus groups and individual interviews with 40 HIV+ African American and Latino heterosexual women. Very few women reported risk behaviors. **For most of the women, their method of prevention was abstinence from sex** and not sharing needles.

- Only 1 woman out of 40 reported unprotected sex
- 2 shared needles
- 3 used non-injection drugs
- 2 traded sex for money or drugs

The women chose **abstinence** for several reasons:

- Feeling unwanted
- Not wanting to deal with disclosure
- Feeling isolated in their community

The few women who engaged in **risk** reported the following reasons:

- Long-term drug addiction
- Depression
- Loneliness
- Hopelessness

" When you are high, you don't pay attention to cleaning your works, or using a rubber. You just want to fix and that's it, no matter if you have to sell your own ass or steal. You want the high and that's it, you are gone. Being addicted is a bitch. " *-Participant*

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" I think I would be more liable to die of a gun shot around here than AIDS. " -Participant

Suggestions for interventions

- **Support**
 - Offer support groups for HIV+ women of color during evenings and weekends
 - Decrease feeling of isolation and stigma
 - Provide child care
- **Mental Health**
 - Provide counseling and treatment for depression
 - Offer help dealing with denial and anger around childhood sexual abuse and adult drug use
 - Have training on how to disclose HIV status to partners and family
- **Drug use**
 - Provide drug abuse treatment
- **Transportation**
 - Offer bus tokens
 - Encourage taxi service to come to the neighborhoods
- **General**
 - Incorporate spiritual guidance into programs
 - Increase Spanish-speaking providers and translators
 - Emphasize that HIV can be passed to a woman's unborn baby; encourage prenatal care
- **Community**
 - Increase policing and prevention programs for youth in the neighborhoods to deal with the prevalence of drugs and violence
 - Educate community about stigma of living with HIV

Lessons learned

- **Mental health counseling and treatment, drug treatment and support groups** are needed for HIV+ African American and Latina women living in South central LA.
- A **continuum of care**, including transportation, child care, case management, nutritional counseling and cultural, linguistic and gender relevant services is needed.
- Innovative programs for HIV+ women of color living in urban areas need to **address socio-cultural structural barriers** such as poverty, violence, lack of access to HIV services and lack of neighborhood transit.

AIDS Partnership California (APC) is a private-public funding collaborative that includes foundation and corporate funders and the California State Office of AIDS. APC is a program of Northern California Grantmakers, an association of 160 foundations and corporate giving programs.
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