



HIV Prevention Strategies for Heterosexual Black/African American Men and Women

Jessie Murphy, December 18, 2015

Strategic Overview

The rates of HIV infection for Black men and women remain disproportionately high in the United States. However, individual risk behavior does account for this disparity. Research shows that Black men and women do not engage in riskier behavior than other racial and ethnic groups. Instead, social and economic factors, such as stigma, racial discrimination, incarceration, poverty, and barriers to health care and housing contribute to the HIV epidemic in African American communities. HIV prevention providers, who primarily work on the individual-level intervention of counseling, testing, and referral, nonetheless have a key role to play in countering the forces that influence this disproportionate burden of HIV disease. They can draw on existing community strengths to support individuals in their efforts to maintain optimal health.

Additional Resources

[Black AIDS Institute](#) is an HIV/AIDS think tank focused on stopping the HIV pandemic in Black communities by engaging and mobilizing Black institutions and individuals in efforts to confront HIV. The Institute interprets public and private sector HIV policies, conducts trainings, offers technical assistance, disseminates information, and provides advocacy mobilization from a “uniquely and unapologetically Black point of view.”

[National Minority AIDS Council](#) a coalition of faith-based and community-based organizations, as well as HIV service organizations, advocating for and delivering HIV services in communities of color nationwide.

Strategy #1: Targeted Prevention Messaging Campaigns

The goal of developing HIV prevention messages is to reduce the barriers to prevention interventions and promote their benefits. Messages should seek to reframe negative attitudes and beliefs as positive ones. Important areas to address are perceptions of sexual risk behaviors, HIV-related stigma, and capacity to effectively undertake interventions such as harm reduction, HIV testing, and PrEP. The more specific, and meaningful, the messaging, the greater the impact the message will have.

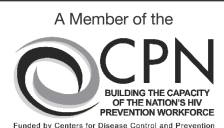
The CDC’s [Act Against AIDS](#) is a five-year national prevention campaign to raise HIV awareness and increase testing, particularly among African Americans and other members of other communities at increased risk. *Act Against AIDS* consists of several concurrent HIV prevention campaigns and uses mass media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet) to deliver important HIV prevention messages. One campaign, in particular, encourages Black women to get tested for HIV.

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[Take Charge. Take the Test.](#) is a national campaign that encourages HIV testing among Black/African American women between the ages of 18 and 34. The March 2012 campaign was implemented in 10 U.S. cities where large numbers of Black women are represented and affected by HIV. Through compelling messages and imagery, *Take Charge. Take the Test.* helps Black women recognize their risk of getting HIV and empowers them with the information they need to take charge of their sexual health. *Take Charge. Take the Test.* was informed by significant research with Black women across the United States, and interviews with nationally-renowned consultants, experts, and community leaders.

[Greater Than AIDS](#) is a public information campaign working to increase knowledge, confront stigma, and promote actions to prevent the spread of HIV through targeted campaigns and community outreach. It is supported by a broad coalition of public and private sector partners, including media and other corporate allies; federal, state and local health agencies; national leadership groups; and HIV service and community organizations. The campaign organizers offer a huge gallery of promotional and informational materials for free or at low-cost to partnering agencies.

[Empowered](#) is a campaign developed with Alicia Keys that affirms the power of women as mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, partners and people living with HIV to change the course of HIV disease through every day actions. The cross-platform campaign includes public service announcements (PSAs), social media promotions, informational materials, and more. “We Are Empowered,” an inspiring half-hour video of Keys in conversation with five women living with HIV, is available for community screenings and discussion.

Additional Resources

[Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative \(AAALI\)](#) is a network of national-level organizations that focuses on African Americans and other communities at increased risk for HIV.

[National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day](#) is an HIV testing and treatment community mobilization initiative for Blacks in the United States and across the diaspora.

Strategy #2: Alternative Testing Sites

A significant barrier to HIV testing within Black communities is a mistrust of medical institutions and establishments. Research suggests that this mistrust stems from the general lack of access to medical care among African Americans as well as the poor outcomes many experience during encounters with clinicians. Availability of routine and repeat HIV testing services does little for African Americans who do not have access to or do not seek regular health care services.

Mobile testing and community venue-based testing programs provide alternative opportunities to reach this population. Interventions may involve partnerships with locations such as nail salons, barber shops and hair salons, farmer’s markets, clothing stores, and churches, and festivals and other local events. Since a strong relationship with community partners is key to the success of this strategy, implementation may require a significant investment of time and attention.

Additional Resources

[Sisters Empowered, Sisters Aware: Three Strategies to Recruit African American Women for HIV Testing](#) is an article describing research findings of the SESA project.

[Recruitment Strategies to Engage African American Men in HIV Testing](#) is an article describing research findings of the HIV Testing Factors among Rural, Black Men (HiTFARM) study.

[A Literature Synthesis of Health Promotion Research in Salons and Barbershops](#) is a summary of research, recruitment, and interventions related to promoting health within these settings.

Strategy #3: Other High Impact Prevention Interventions

CDC maintains an online compendium of evidence-based behavioral interventions (EBI) and best practices that have been scientifically proven to significantly reduce HIV risk or promote HIV care. The site links to training and materials necessary to implement these interventions. A number of these interventions are designed to target Black heterosexual men and women.

Peers Reaching Out and Modeling Intervention Strategies ([PROMISE](#)) is a community-level intervention based on several behavior change theories. The intervention requires a community assessment process that leads to the recruitment and training of target population peer advocates, the creation of target population role model stories, and the distribution of these stories along with other risk reduction materials to help people move toward safer sex or risk reduction practices.

[Sister to Sister](#), delivered during the course of a routine medical visit, is a brief (20-minute), one-on-one, skill-based HIV/sexually transmitted disease (STD) risk-reduction behavioral intervention for sexually active African American women 18 to 45 years old.

[Popular Opinion Leader](#) is a community-level intervention that involves identifying, enlisting, and training key opinion leaders to encourage safer sexual norms and behaviors within their social networks through risk-reduction conversations.

[Couples HIV Testing and Counseling \(CHTC\)](#) occurs when two or more persons who are in—or are planning to be in—a sexual relationship receive all elements of HIV testing and counseling together. This includes HIV prevention counseling, receipt of test results, and linkage to follow-up services.