

HIV Behavioral Intervention: Hispanic Men Who Have Sex with Men

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Antonia Novello] The Los Angeles County Office of AIDS Programs and Policy funds an HIV prevention program for Latino and other men. The program is conducted by the AIDS Project of Los Angeles, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of people affected by HIV and reducing the incidence of the virus. The majority of the clientele in the HIV prevention program of course, are Latino.

[Announcer] AIDS Project Los Angeles, conducts an HIV prevention project, based on the Mpowerment model, designed by Dr. Susan Kegeles and colleagues at the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at the University of California, San Francisco. Mpowerment is a social and behavioral intervention designed to reduce unprotected sex among young gay and bisexual men. This community-level intervention meets CDC's criteria for evidence of effectiveness for behavioral change. Mpowerment has been implemented and adapted in several locations, for local clientele, including African-Americans and Latinos. Mpowerment is designed for and by the local participants. The guiding principles for this multilevel intervention include personal and community empowerment; the infusion of new behaviors through social networks; positive peer influence; HIV prevention within the context of other compelling issues for young gay and bisexual men, such as social issues; and community building. A key component of the Mpowerment intervention includes designing and delivering activities to build pride in one's ethnicity and shaping the social environment in which the young men live, by creating a social environment that supports them.

(Bar scene)

>> How're you doing, sir?
>> Alright.
>> Minority outreach.
>> Thank you.
>> You're welcome.
>> How're you doing, sir?
>> Oh. Thank you
>> You guys...
>> Oh -- I like these.

So it isn't just the men adopting safer behaviors, but the environment actually supports them in that direction.

(Bar scene, continued)

>> Thank you.
>> If you're interested in it, there's a program on Thursdays in the afternoon, if you'd like to join. The information is there.

(Bar scene over)

[Announcer] These are critical aspects of tailoring the intervention to the ethnicity and social needs of the particular clientele. About 85 percent of the participants in the Mpowerment program at AIDS Project Los Angeles are Latino. Through twice-weekly activities, such as group discussions, community organizing efforts, and life skills development, the young men are trained as peer educators to lead the sessions and conduct outreach to other youth. For example, role playing in other sessions involves life examples to help youth see the relationship between the response to everyday situations and HIV risk behavior. Some activities are specifically designed by the youth to relate to Latino issues, such as discussion around Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, to talk about life and death. The project in Los Angeles is designed for ages 13 to 24, but most young men who participate are at least 16 years old. AIDS Project Los Angeles, in collaboration with Dr. Kegeles and the participants adapted the Mpowerment model to serve the local clientele. For example, some activities are delivered in Spanish, and discussions include culturally specific issues, such as immigration and the integration of one's sexual orientation within the Latino culture. To many clientele, HIV appears very low among their daily priorities. Other compelling issues compete for their attention on a daily basis, such as housing, school, employment, substance abuse, internalized homophobia, and coming out to family and friends about one's sexual orientation.

(Scene)

>> I told my mom I'm bisexual and she's like, "okay?". I'm like, ma, do you even know what that means? She's like, "No."

(Scene over)

[Announcer] AIDS Project Los Angeles has also conducted support activities with parents of the young men in this project. The Mpowerment intervention helps young men build skills in dealing with many issues, such as coming out to family, developing healthy relationships, expressing one's sexuality in healthy ways, staying in school, attending college or other educational programs, and finding and maintaining employment, thus increasing self-esteem and reducing risk behaviors. For the young men in Los Angeles, this behavioral intervention has instilled a sense of pride in terms of who they are as Latinos, and as men who have same-sex attraction. Also, the program staff, who are all Latino gay men ages 25 to 35, serve as positive, healthy role models. In fact, the staff serve as de facto family for many participants. As a result, the young men feel safe and accepted in the program, and also empowered in terms of their health and their life. In the Mpowerment program, HIV prevention skills are incorporated into the activities. And participants are encouraged and supported in obtaining HIV counseling, testing, treatment and referral services, as appropriate for the individual client.

[Dr. Raul Romaguera] If you'd like more information from the AIDS Project Los Angeles about their Mpowerment program for Latino men, please send an email to Terry Smith at tsmith@apla.org. And for information about starting an Mpowerment project for gay men, contact Dr. Susan Kegeles at the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies in San Francisco at susan.kegeles@ucsf.edu.

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.