



SAVE THE DATE

YMSM Summit

Thursday, May 1, 2008
8:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Club 2020
2020 Leeland Street
Houston, TX 77003

To increase knowledge of the HIV/STD epidemic among young men who have sex with men and to stimulate institutional and community mobilization.

     

Program Evaluation Report Executive Summary

Conducted and Reported by
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Executive Summary

Young Men who Have Sex with Men (YMSM) Summit Epidemiological Profile

Men who have sex with MSM, account for 71% of HIV infections among adult men and adolescents in the United States whom identify themselves MSM (CDC, 2007). The numbers of HIV diagnoses have increased to nearly 12% among young men who have sex with men (CDC, 2007). In Texas (2002-2006) 60,571 people per 100,000 population reported HIV positive (Texas DSHS, 2006). Of these, 50.7% were reported to be men who have sex with other men. Analysis of the number of persons with HIV/AIDS by areas in Texas, revealed that Houston lead with approximately 32.1% (Texas DSHS, 2006).

In the Houston HSDA, the most frequent mode of HIV transmission is male to male sex, with one third of people living with HIV reporting this as their mode of infection and nearly 47% of those with AIDS identifying it (Sanchez, 2005; Texas DSHS, 2005).

Significant racial/ethnic disparities in HIV diagnosis exist within the MSM population. Blacks had the highest rate of new HIV and new AIDS infections (40/100,000 for both HIV and AIDS). This is four times greater than that of Hispanics (10/100,000) and five times that of Whites (8/100,000) (Sanchez, 2005; Texas DSHS, 2005). Half of new HIV diagnoses were among black, non-Hispanics compared to 27% among white, non-Hispanics (Texas DSHS, 2006).

YMSM Summit Background

HIV-prevention outreach educational efforts are necessary to curb the increased HIV and syphilis epidemics experienced by YMSM, especially in the Houston area. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Houston Department of State Health Services (HDHHS), in collaboration with the Harris County Hospital District, Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES), Houston Area Community Services (HACS), AIDS Resource Group, and St. Hope Foundation, aimed to address this pertinent community health issue through the implementation of the YMSM Summit, an HIV/STD prevention action summit.

The YMSM Summit was held at the local nightlife hotspot Club 2020 May 1st, 2008 during the Black Pride Weekend "Splash". YMSM summit convened representatives of local agencies, businesses, organizations and community members to increase knowledge of HIV/STD epidemic among young men who have sex with men and to stimulate institutional and community mobilization

YMSM Educational Inputs and Activities

Participants at the summit (1) received up-to date literature on the HIV/STD epidemic, (2) attended Didactic presentations and among YMSM in Houston, (3) engaged in 1 ½ hour breakout group discussions (4) completed YMSM summit program evaluation.

Summit Breakout Session Format and Data Collection Methodology

Approximately 150 representatives from community-based organizations, health-services providers, and local, state, and federal health organizations were assigned to 20 groups composed of five (5) to eight (8) invitees and one (1) facilitator. The participants engaged in two 45-minute group discussions on each of the two (2) critical questions (1 1/2 hours). Each group answered a series of objective questions and recorded their responses manually on flip charts. Following the group discussions a participant from each of the 20 groups summarized the results of their group discussion in a video recorded open plenary session at the end of the YMSM breakout session activities.

Summit Breakout Session Data Analysis Methodology

Content analysis of the YMSM breakout sessions involved the transcription and coding of verbal and written text verbatim into categorical thematic units. Once the text is transcribed and categorically coded, the constant comparison method is utilized to document similarities and dissimilarities in the text and themes that emerged through content analyses of the breakout discussion sessions. The constant comparison method also captured patterns and prominent themes that emerged from the merging of transcribed YMSM text and dissection of transcribed YMSM text into thematic units. Following the constant comparison of thematic units, several memos are created to summarize the results of the breakout session discussions' categorical thematic units. Finally, the triangulation was performed through the simultaneous analysis of the categorized thematic units, DVD-recorded summary of the breakout discussion, and other sources of data (i.e., didactic presentations and peer-reviewed articles).

Critical Question 1:

What causes YMSM to be disproportionately affected by HIV and other STDs?

Major findings from the breakout session's discussion of key factors influencing high-risk behaviors among YMSM indicate that attitudes, psychobiological issues, cultural norms, and socioeconomic factors greatly influence YMSM engagement in high-risk behaviors. The discussion groups cited youth invincibility and lack of perceived susceptibility to HIV/STDs as key factors that influence high-risk behaviors. The participants stated that young men who have sex with men believe that they are not at risk for contracting HIV or STDs, and their "it can't happen to me" mentality serves as a barrier to adopting safer sex practices, such as condom use and HIV/STD testing among YMSM (Table 1).

Table 1. Physical Locations and Venues.

Important High Risk Behaviors	Factors contribute to high-risk behaviors	Breakout session Examples
Unprotected Sex	Attitudes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Invincibility • lack of perceived severity and

Anonymous Sex Sex w/ Multiple Partners Drug Alcohol abuse		susceptibility to STD/HIV • Low self-esteem
	Psychobiological issues	• Early sexual development/initiation
	Culture	• Communal homophobia • Parental Attitudes
	Culture internet	• Social networks/online dating • Sexual norms • Comprehensive sex education
	Socio-Economic	• Homelessness, • Financial instability • Prostitution

Analysis of the discussion also reveals that most participants also mentioned cultural norms and social networks as being most influential on YMSM engagement in high-risk behaviors. Social norms in the YMSM community—as well as internet-based social networks, such as Facebook, MySpace, and Manhunt—perpetuate sexual norms that not only support promiscuity but also increase the availability and acceptability of anonymous sex with partners courted via internet-based social networks. In addition, analysis of discussions indicates that the relationship between the cultural norms of homophobia and socioeconomic factors may increase MSM vulnerability to homelessness, financial instability, and prostitution, particularly among YMSM. Participants stated that YMSM are at risk for being disowned by their families and not accepted by their communities; as a result, they may be living on the streets and utilizing prostitution as a means for survival (Table 1).

Critical Question 2:

How can we address the issues contributing to the HIV/STD epidemic among YMSM?

Major findings from the breakout discussion on the physical location and venues where YMSM engage in high-risk behaviors demonstrate the representative commitment to tackling YMSM risk factors and high-risk behavior head on in the venues and communities where YMSM live, congregate, and socialize. These areas and locations include communities with high rates of MSM prostitution, popular nightclubs, and public areas (Table 2).

Physical Locations & Venues

Major findings from the breakout discussion on the physical location and venues where YMSM engage in high-risk behaviors demonstrate the representative commitment to tackling YMSM risk factors and high-risk behavior head on in the venues and communities where YMSM live, congregate, and socialize. These areas and locations include popular nightclubs, public areas and communities describes as

sites for MSM prostitution. According to the breakout discussion groups, it's imperative to stem YMSM engagement in high-risk behaviors at well-known venues through education, outreach, and the redefinition of social norms that deem it acceptable to engage in anonymous and unprotected sex in and around the venues.

Successful Strategies

Major findings of the breakout discussion of successful strategies to reach YMSM indicate that addressing HIV/STD prevention and testing through social networks is a major priority among the organizations represented at the summit. The discussion of local prevention and treatment programs revealed several characteristics of successful programs. These characteristics include building meaningful partnerships between organizations, agencies and community leaders. Many participants argue for the need to foster meaningful and supportive relationships between organizations and YMSM community (Table 2).

Secondly, the representatives stated that programs must include the recruitment and training of leaders of YMSM social networks/cliques to assist with community outreach and the development of culturally relevant and age-appropriate prevention and treatment activities. In addition to building ties with the YMSM community, participants also emphasized the need to establish relationships with the owners of popular YMSM-frequented venues to implement social events that include HIV-/STD-prevention activities, information, and services. Furthermore, the representatives insisted that agencies use contemporary and age-appropriate mediums not only to perform outreach with the YMSM community, but also to deliver prevention and treatment services (Table 2).

Table 2. Successful Outreach and Prevention/Treatment Strategies

Characteristics of Effective programs	Outreach	Collaborations
Build trusting relationships	Establish trust, mutual respect, cultural sensitivity	Enhance communication, Share information
Utilize YMSM community assets and encourage community involvement	Understand YMSM social networks and cliques YMSM preferred venues Outreach, host forums and social events Peer-education	Provide linkages that Streamline complimentary services provided at collaborating agencies
	Providing education materials and peer education training to leaders of social cliques Share volunteer peer-educators	Providing education materials and peer education training to owners/operator of YMSM preferred businesses.
Innovative & culturally appropriate activities	Use Internet and innovative mediums/technology to deliver tailored messages age/cultural appropriate technology (i.e. online dating networks, MySpace.)	Forums and Summits to share outreach best practices for conducting outreach and delivering information and services to diverse segments of the YMSM community

The discussion groups reiterated the need to stimulate community-based participatory action and collaborations between agencies and the YMSM community. The representatives from various agencies expressed their desire to jointly sponsored health summits that promote responsible sexual behaviors among YMSM and communicate best practices between agencies that serve YMSM. Representative suggested employing the capacity building activities that may contribute the feasibility of collaborating with relevant stakeholders in the community. Many representatives called for the need to increase financial support for community-based collaborative efforts that aim to reduce the HIV/STD epidemic among YMSM. Participants requested additional information on successful prevention and treatment services at local agencies and the availability of educational and professional training resources. Additionally, the representatives emphasized the need enhance communication channels between agencies and improve referral practices between agencies.

A Call to Action

The representative from various agencies and organizations in Houston that serve YMSM generated specific action items to address the STD/HIV epidemic among YMSM. Analysis of the breakout session reveal common theme of increase organizational capability building and utilizing improve social networks' to conduct effective outreach activities with YMSM. The suggested activities include conducting age-specific peer-education and focus groups with YMSM to address the psychosocial and behavioral issues that influence high-risk behaviors among YMSM. In addition, representatives suggests that agencies reach out to leaders in the local Houston area, specifically parents and religious leaders, to address homophobia and socio-cultural issues impacting the self-esteem and sexual identity development of YMSM.

Representatives at the summit emphasized the need for businesses in the YMSM community to take a more active role in prevention outreach and treatment activities by increasing the availability of educational materials and through hosting prevention and treatment social events at the business and venues trusted by young men in the gay community.

Finally, representatives at the summit argued that health clinics, CBOs, and state/federal agencies should increase their community-based participatory activities that include the active participation of peer educators and members of the YMSM community. The representatives also advocate the employment of innovative strategies to increase the coalition's capacity to serve YMSM in culturally specific ways that comprehensively address issues pertinent to prevention of HIV/STD among YMSM

YMSM Summit Evaluation Procedures

YMSM Summit participants completed a self-administered 19-item Lichert scale survey at the end of summit activities. Data analysis was conducted to examine the frequency of responses to the survey questions.

YMSM Evaluation Key Questions

❖ To what extent did the breakout session successfully convene local agencies, businesses, organizations, and community members who interact with young men who have sex with men (YMSM) to reduce HIV- and STD-transmission rates among YMSM at the agency or provider level?
❖ To what extent did the breakout session increase participants' awareness of those disproportionately affected by HIV and other STDs among YMSM?
❖ To what extent did the breakout session garner commitment from attendees to begin or continue addressing this issue at their own agencies, businesses, or organizations in a manner feasible to them?
❖ To what extent did the breakout sessions provide participants with feasible techniques to address factors contributing to the HIV/STD epidemic among YMSM?

Summit Evaluation Results

Participants at the YMSM summit represented a wide range of agencies and organizations in the Houston community. Approximately 32% represented local agencies, and 26% represented community-based organizations. Some participants (20%) marked "other" when asked whom in the community they represented. Further analysis of their responses reveals that the majority represented local health departments, and others indicated that they represented state agencies, such as the Harris County Jail.

The results from the evaluation reveal that nearly 90% of participants agree that summit sessions increased their knowledge and awareness of the factors and socio-cultural issues contributing to the HIV/STD epidemic among YMSM. Over 89% of participants agree that summit sessions provided information on available community programs that deliver HIV/STD prevention and treatment services to the YMSM population.

In addition, nearly 80% of participants agree that summit sessions provided (1) feasible prevention and treatment activities, (2) offered useful techniques for maximizing collaborations among community partners, or (3) provided capacity-building resources for attendees to address these issues at their own agencies, businesses, or organizations.

A majority of participants (84%) agree that the nightclub (Club 2020) was an ideal location for delivering health-related summits, and 88% agreed that the facility was appropriate for the implementation of presentations and breakout sessions

Summary of Findings

An analysis of summit evaluation results reveals that the majority of participants agree that the summit increased their knowledge and awareness of the complex factors that contribute to the increasing rates of HIV/STDs among YMSM. Representatives agreed that the summit breakout session and didactic presentations increased their commitment to addressing the HIV//STD epidemic

within their agencies through collaborative partnerships. Additionally, representatives agree that the discussion session helped facilitate the development of strategic action items specific to each agency for addressing HIV/STDs among YMSM. Participants also agree that the implementation of the YMSM Summit at Club 2020 was appropriate for the delivery of health-related summits.