

New York

Bringing HIV/AIDS Prevention Education into the Spotlight

Public Health Problem

New York City (NYC) remains the epicenter of the U.S. HIV/AIDS epidemic, with almost 200,000 cases diagnosed as of December 2005. Each year, young people in NYC engage in high rates of sexual risk behaviors, putting themselves at risk for becoming infected with HIV and other STDs, which supports the need to continue to develop and enhance HIV prevention programs for youth. For example, in 2005

- 48% of NYC public school students ever had sex.
- 31% of students who were sexually active during the previous three months did not use a condom during the last sexual intercourse.
- 18% report having sex with four or more persons in their lifetime.
- More than 24,000 teenage girls became pregnant.

Program Example

To ensure that NYC students receive the most accurate, up-to-date HIV prevention education, the NYC Department of Education's Office of Health and Family Living (OHEFL) updated its *HIV/AIDS Curriculum* in December 2005. The updated curriculum is science-based, skills-driven, standards-based, and integrated into the overall educational program.

In 2006–2007, with support from CDC, OHEFL began providing professional development to teachers, administrators, and parent groups to ensure that the curriculum was being effectively delivered to students. To begin to address the challenge of providing professional development to staff in more than 1,400 schools, OHEFL implemented a variety of activities aimed at reaching the greatest number of staff in the most efficient manner. Activities included the following:

- Providing a series of full-day trainings on curriculum implementation to more than 340 elementary, middle, and high school teachers.
- Establishing a cadre of trainers with the knowledge and skills to provide curriculum implementation trainings to their peers — 825 participants were reached during 18
- two-day trainings delivered by cadre members.
- Securing funds to hire Planned Parenthood of NYC to train 900 school-based Parent Coordinators on how to discuss the curriculum with parents.
- Developing a presentation and support materials for schools to use when communicating with parents about the curriculum.
- Partnering with teachers to adapt the curriculum for students with special needs.

Implications and Impact

Over the course of a year, OHEFL was able to provide more than 2,000 teachers, administrators, and parents with the skills and resources needed to effectively deliver the *HIV/AIDS Curriculum*. OHEFL also expanded its capacity to provide future professional development by creating an HIV/AIDS cadre of trainers.

As a result of these efforts, OHEFL secured additional funding from New York State to further support its HIV prevention programs, and from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to design and implement an HIV prevention peer leadership pilot program.