

Project BEAT—Collaborating to Address HIV Education and Attitudes in Teens

Broward County, Florida

Problem Overview

In 2004, an estimated 4,883 young people aged 13–24 in the 33 states reporting to the CDC were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Through 2003, CDC estimates that 5,492 children under the age of 13 in the United States died as a result of AIDS-related illnesses. Statistics from 2005 show that Broward County, Florida, leads the nation in new AIDS infections.

Program Description

Although Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) had a well-structured HIV/AIDS curriculum for grades 2–12, data revealed a need for enhanced secondary school education. To improve existing programming and maximize CDC funds for preventing HIV/AIDS infections, sexually transmitted disease transmissions, and unplanned pregnancies, BCPS partnered with the Broward County chapter of the American Red Cross to develop and implement an HIV/AIDS education program for secondary students—Project BEAT (Bridging Education and Attitudes in Teens).

Project BEAT blends existing BCPS HIV/AIDS curricula with Red Cross standards and objectives, including peer and parental education components. Specifically, the program provides instructors to teach a supplemental HIV curriculum and trains teachers to facilitate peer education clubs in districts at higher risk for HIV transmission.

Program Impact

Highlights of the program's successes include the following:

- By the end of the third year, Project BEAT reached nearly 54,000 middle and high school youth and approximately 2,200 parents and community members.
- During the 2006–2007 academic year, assessments given to randomly selected secondary school students indicated a 97.3% post-test score in knowledge of HIV/AIDS and related decision making skills, an increase of 28% overall.
- By the close of the 2006–2007 academic year, more than 150 BCPS high school students were certified as Red Cross HIV/AIDS instructors to provide their peers with science-based information under the auspices of Red Cross staff.

Effective risk reduction strategies offer hope for decreasing the spread of HIV/AIDS. In times of shrinking budgets, partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential for implementing health promotion and disease prevention activities to improve the health of our nation's youth. Addressing a common goal through combined efforts can yield dynamic partnerships, pooled resources, shared expertise, and new insights into better ways to address the health challenges facing our youth.

Note: Success stories, including background data and outcomes, reflect information as reported by participating programs. Also, in this context, impact refers to short-term or intermediate outcomes.

