Assessing Risk in Young Adolescents and their Caregivers Living in NYC Family Shelters







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What is HOPE?

• <u>HIV</u> <u>O</u>utreach to Homeless <u>P</u>arents and <u>E</u>arly Adolescents

• 4 year grant funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse to provide HIV/AIDS and alcohol abuse prevention programming to families living in NYC shelters with youth between the ages of 11 to 14

• Families receive \$20 for parents and \$10 for youth for each session they attend and every questionnaire they fill out

• Assessments are conducted at baseline, post-test, at 6 mo., and 12 mo

• Intent to treat model

HOPE Health

- 3 week program
- Parents and youth are apart during the sessions to foster open discussion among their peers
- Provides up-to- date health information on HIV/AIDS and alcohol and drug abuse

HOPE Family

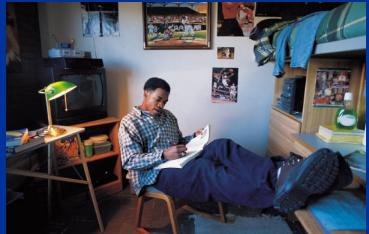
- 8 week program
- Parents and youth separate during session, then come back together to discuss as a family
- Aims to strengthen protective family processes (e.g. family communication around HIV/AIDS and alcohol and drug abuse)

Demographics - Youth

Gender: 47% girls, 53% boys
Race/Ethnicity:

■ 45% Black

- 43% Hispanic
- 9% Both
- 3% Other



85% were born in the U.S.
Average age: 12.4 years
Average grade: 6th

Demographics – Primary Caregiver

- Gender: 89% female, 11% male
- Race/Ethnicity:
 - 48% Black
 - 42% Hispanic
 - 8% Both
 - 2% Other
- 68% were born in the U.S.
- Average age: 37.7 years



- Education: 8th grade or less to post college. (Average was less than high school grad)
- Currently employed: 16%
- Currently married: 24%

Shelter Experience

- Time in shelter system ranged from less than a month to over a year with an average stay of around 6 months.
- For almost half (45%) this was not their first stay in a shelter.
- Although most (children 87%, parents 81%) reported feeling safe at the shelter, 13% of children and 19% of parents did not.

	% Children	% Parents
Life Event Item	Reporting *	Reporting
A family member was attacked or beaten	43 (44)	36
A family member was stabbed or shot	33 (35)	24
A friend was stabbed or shot	31 (31)	32
A family member was stopped and	56 (58)	55
question by the police		
Someone threatened to hurt a member of	36 (37)	36
my family		
A family member was robbed or mugged	31 (33)	31
Saw people dealing drugs in the	58 (56)	61
neighborhood		
Parent lost job	41 (41)	40
Death of a family member	62 (63)	62
Family member having a drug problem	44 (47)	46
Were physically attacked	35 (37)	34
Witnessed a fight in which a weapon was	41 (44)	33
used		
Saw drug deals	53 (54)	57

*All children with baseline (target children only)

School Performance

Item	Youth	Parents
Getting in trouble at school for too many absences	34%	14%
School work had deteriorated	22%	22%
Changed to a new school during the past year	72%	54%
Repeated a grade during the past year	50%	40%

Youth Mental Health

Youth report

- Have suicidal thoughts 21%
- Worried that bad things will happen to them 47%

Caregiver report

- Similarly, 49% of caregivers reported that it was somewhat or certainly true that their children had many worries or often seemed worried
- 27% reported that it was somewhat or certainly true that their child was often unhappy, depressed or tearful and 30% that their child had many fears

Youth Mental Health, continued

- 43% of caregivers reported that their child had at least minor difficulties in emotions, concentration, behavior, or getting along with others (20% reported definite or severe difficulties)
- Of those who reported difficulties, close to half (43%) reported that difficulties had been present for less than 6 months

Parent Mental Health

37% scored above the clinical cut off (BSI)
Mean = 0.56 (s.d.= 1.58, range 0 - 3.04)





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Youth Substance Use

These results seem positive and comparable to a community based sample

Cigarette smoking: 12% reported having tried cigarettes and only 4% reported having smoked at all in the past month.

Alcohol use: 22% reported having tried alcohol and 7% reported having used alcohol one or more time per week in the past month.

Marijuana use: 7% reported having tried marijuana, 5% in the past month

Parent Substance Use

- Parents reported normative or less than normative lifetime use or experimentation with drugs and alcohol (for example, 58% reported having ever drank alcohol and 39% reported having ever used marijuana)
- Reported current use was also low: mean number of days of alcohol use over past month was less than 1-2 days and mean number of days of marijuana use was close to zero

Sexual Possibility/Activity

- 27% experienced a sexual possibility situation (in comparison with a comparable community sample which was 12% (X² (1, <u>N</u> = 128) = 10.18, <u>p</u><.001))</p>
- 7% reported having had sex
- 69% felt they were too young to have sex (20% disagreed, 11% were in the middle)
- Close to half reported that they would feel comfortable talking to a boyfriend or girlfriend about:
 - Concerns of getting infected with HIV/STIs (41%)
 - Ways to prevent getting infected with HIV/STIs (50%)

Relationship Between mental health of Caregiver and Youth

- There was a significant correlation between parental report of child's difficulties and strengths and child's self report of depression (r = 0.21; p<0.05)</p>
- There was a significant correlation between parental mental health and child mental health (r = 0.21; p<0.05)</p>

There was also a significant correlation between parental mental health and parent report of child's strengths and difficulties (r = 0.40; p<0.01)</p>

Conclusion

- This is a population heavily affected by traumatic and potentially risky events (e.g. changing school, repeating grade, viewing drug dealing etc.)
- Environmental stressors could be impacting school performance
- Families are experiencing great stressors in their lives but have been fairly resilient (i.e. no high report of drug use)

Conclusion (cont.)

Youth in family shelters are at greater risk of engaging in sexual and drug activity as they reported being in sexual possibility situations more often than youth in general population
Programming in family shelters should target the entire family, not be exclusive to youth