

Locally-Developed HIV/AIDS Prevention Intervention Profile



New Mexico

Project Title: Nizhoni SISTA
Contact: Melvin Harrison, Executive Director
Navajo AIDS Network
Gallup, New Mexico
Phone: 928-674-5676
Email: NANmharrison@aol.com

Andrew Gans, HIV Prevention Program Manager
New Mexico Department of Health
1190 S. St. Francis Drive, Room S-1302
Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87502-6110
Phone: 505-476-3624
Email: andrew.gans@state.nm.us

Population(s) served by this intervention: Navajo and other Native American male-to-female transgender women

Length of time this intervention has been funded: 18 months

Goals and objectives:

The intervention's goals and objectives are based on those of the CDC EBI SISTA (Sisters Informing Sisters on Topics about AIDS), for African-American women. However, Nizhoni SISTA is a culturally competent adaptation serving Navajo and other Native American male-to-female transgender women.

Intervention specific activities:

Many of the session activities are based on the SISTA model but adapted for Nizhoni SISTA's target population. For example, all sessions are led by a member of the Native community who identifies as transgender. Additionally, the session components incorporate traditional Navajo songs, stories, poems and values.

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- Session 1 (2 hours): Gender and Ethnic Pride:
 - Opening: Navajo song, introductions in Navajo language
 - Discuss history and meaning of "gender" and "transgender" in the Native community

- Session 2 (2 hours): HIV:
 - Exercises:
 - HIV/STD knowledge: Participants write what they know on poster boards around the room then facilitator debunks myths
 - "What's in my purse?" (e.g. hormones, needles, massage oil, money, newspaper ad, liquor bottle): Each participant takes an item from the purse and the group discusses it and its role in HIV transmission

- Session 3 (2 hours): Communication:
 - Assertive v. Aggressive v. Passive Communication (from SISTA) and the use of vignettes
 - Vignette Example: File clerk at the doctor's office insists on calling you by your "boy name". Discuss the various ways you can respond to this and its corresponding communication style
 - Culturally competent provider answers questions and tells participants what questions they should be asking
 - Decision making model based on SISTA model sheet but discuss Navajo way of decision-making
 - End: Navajo prayer

- Session 4 (2 hours):
 - Participants set a harm reduction goal (e.g. looking for a job)
 - What is coping? (from SISTA): Unhealthy (sex, alcohol) v. healthy (exercise, relaxation methods) ways of coping discussion
 - End: Navajo traveling song about journeying safely

- 2-Month Follow-Up Session (1.5 hours):
 - Photo shoots with participants (do hair and make-up)
 - Consultant offers presentation and advice on building a resume, job searching, interviewing, and dressing professionally

Social determinants of health/co-morbidities addressed by this intervention:

STD
Viral hepatitis
Poverty
Substance use/abuse

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Mental health issues

Domestic violence

Other: Employment status
 Access to health care

New technologies utilized in this intervention:

Cell phones: Text messaging used to advertise the program and recruit participants into the program

Social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, etc.): Used to advertise the program and recruit participants into the program

Costs of developing and implementing this intervention:

- Development: Cost of adaptation covered by CBA-provider, The Transitions Project, University of California - San Francisco
- Implementation: \$22,000/year for 2 cycles which includes .5 FTE at agency (this staff person has other roles as well, beyond intervention implementation)

Evaluation findings related to this intervention:

Those involved with the intervention can see the benefits to the community (e.g. participants becoming sober, going back to school, obtaining employment; formation of a statewide Transgender Task Force of the New Mexico HIV Prevention Community Planning and Action Group) but the evaluation data collected has not yet been formally analyzed and reported since the program is relatively new.

Lessons Learned:

Intervention Development:

- Tried to adapt Many Men Many Voices (3MV) for Navajo transgender population but this was completely unsuccessful. Staff tried SISTA and found that its components for women were more helpful than the components for gay/bisexual men from 3MV (specifically, relationship violence and power in relationships)
- Following the CDC model for adapting EBIs (MAP)/Adapting EBIs for New Settings and Target Populations made adaptation a success
- Although conducting focus groups with the intended target population and analyzing the focus group data was extremely difficult, the focus groups were essential to understanding the population's unique risk factors (e.g. prevalence of "hooking") and identity classification (e.g.

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use of term “transgender”). The data obtained influenced how the intervention was developed, marketed, and implemented

Intervention Implementation:

- Necessary that the staff implementing the intervention and the CBA staff who assisted in adapting the intervention are culturally competent

Other information you should know, related to this intervention:

Finding the right community-based people made this intervention work and that is true of so many things. For the New Mexico Department of Health, this was the result of building on existing relationships with strong local community-based agencies.

The Way Forward:

- Continue to implement and monitor the intervention while collecting data
- Share intervention successes and challenges with CDC Project Officer

Additional Resources:

The Center of Excellence for Transgender Health (formerly The Transitions Project) website: <http://www.transhealth.ucsf.edu/>

Navajo AIDS Network website: <http://www.navajoaidsnetwork.org/>

Writings of Wesley K. Thomas, Ph.D., Academic Dean for the Divisions of Humanities and Social & Behavioral Sciences at Diné College

*For information on the history of gender in pre-acculturation/colonization Navajo culture

DEBI - SISTA: <http://www.effectiveinterventions.org/go/interventions/sista>