

**Focus on Youth and HIV/AIDS:
Defining an Agenda for Youth of Color**
March 12-14, 2007



MEETING SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

On March 12-14, 2007 the National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD) convened a meeting in Washington, D.C. with the goal of strengthening HIV/AIDS prevention programs targeting youth of color (YOC) at the state and national level. The meeting provided participants an opportunity to share information about HIV/AIDS prevention programs targeting youth of color in their jurisdictions and to identify strategies to address programming gaps (see Attachment A for meeting agenda). Specific objectives of the meeting included:

- Describing the national landscape of HIV/AIDS among youth of color;
- Identifying major challenges to providing HIV/AIDS prevention services to youth of color;
- Naming strategies to increase the focus on, and effectiveness of, HIV/AIDS prevention services targeting youth of color;
- Explaining the role of CDC's Health Disparities work group; and
- Developing a one-year state action plan to increase efforts to address HIV/AIDS prevention among youth of color.

Teams from five states attended the meeting, as well as members of NASTAD's African American Advisory Committee (see Table 1*). Teams represented jurisdictions with a moderate to high prevalence of HIV infection among youth (ages 13-24) that had demonstrated a commitment to addressing youth issues. State teams included AIDS directors, senior HIV prevention managers, managers or coordinators of directly funded prevention programs serving youth, and youth active in local HIV prevention programs or community planning groups.

Table 1: Youth of Color Meeting State Teams & Other Participants
March 2007 Participants
Kentucky
Louisiana
Massachusetts
New York
Ohio
NASTAD's African American Advisory Committee (AAAC)

This report describes key products developed during this meeting as well as findings from the meeting evaluation. David Napp, an independent consultant with Practical Applications of Public Health, helped design and facilitate the meeting and produced the meeting summary.

DEFINING CHALLENGES

Teams participated in an activity to identify challenges to providing HIV prevention programs to youth of color. First, each participant independently listed challenges. These ideas were then shared and discussed in small groups to identify common issues. The issues identified by each small group were written on sheets of paper, posted on the wall, and discussed and sorted by the whole group to identify common themes. Lastly, these themes were labeled to codify six major challenges to providing HIV prevention programs to youth of color. These challenges are presented in Table 2 below. The bulleted items beneath each title are the original issues identified by small groups. It is important to note that this list represents the salient challenges identified by meeting participants and is not intended to be an exhaustive list or to represent the challenges experienced by other individuals or states not in attendance.

Table 2: Challenges to Providing HIV Prevention Programs to Youth of Color

Competitive Environment

- Lack of effective collaborations with other organizations
- Territorial issues
- Shifting resources
- Capacity building/technical assistance needs

Lack of Culturally Competent Programs and Research

- Programs not culturally competent
- Lack of culturally relevant programs
- Lack of indigenous/participatory researchers
- “Cookie-Cutter” messages
- Risk categories vs. behaviors

Cultural Barriers

- Culture = no sex talk
- Stigma, labels, and stereotypes
- Lack of parent involvement
- Lack of opportunity (hope)
- Self-esteem and self-worth
- Church involvement

Lack of Holistic Approach

- Need for improved interventions
- One dimensional approach
- Ignoring social-cultural factors
- HIV prevention not a priority for youth
- Lack of comprehensive care
- Critical thinking skills

Deficit Approach

- Limited efforts to build trust/relationships with youth
- Lack of youth development
- Non-holistic sexual health development
- Self-esteem and self-worth

Lack of “True” Youth Involvement

- Lack of true youth empowerment programs
- Unequal youth/adult partnership
- No youth voice
- Limited youth voices
- Lack of youth community involvement

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES

Participants attended breakout discussions to brainstorm strategies to address the identified challenges. Team members from each state were assigned to one of four groups to maximize interaction across teams and increase exposure to new ideas. Project staff was assigned to facilitate each group. Group discussions were audio taped and facilitators produced a written summary of strategies after the meeting. These summaries were consolidated by the consultant to produce the strategies listed below. As before, it is important to acknowledge that these strategies represent the ideas of meeting participants. They are not intended to be a comprehensive listing of everything that can be done to advance HIV prevention activities among youth of color nor are they assumed to be appropriate for every jurisdiction or agency. Stakeholders are encouraged to consider additional or alternative actions as needed.

- **Adopt a youth development approach:** Provide services in a manner that recognizes the assets of youth and engages them as active participants in defining and addressing HIV and other issues of concern (e.g., design client intake processes to assess youth assets and not just their needs). Develop initiatives that help youth and the community-at-large recognize the strengths of youth culture, counteract common negative stereotypes about young people, and cultivate youth's sense of self-worth to empower them to make informed choices.
- **Build relationships:** Recognize that good relationships between service providers and youth are prerequisite for the delivery of effective, culturally competent youth services. Fund agencies with established relationships in youth communities and support relationship building as part of the service delivery process.
- **Develop youth leadership:** Proactively involve youth and ensure they have an equal voice at the table in Community Planning Groups and other forums in which important programmatic and policy decisions are made. Build youth leadership capacity by establishing mentoring programs and by convening national and local youth leadership summits to support training and networking for youth leaders. Involve youth in all facets of program design, delivery, and evaluation and seek opportunities to utilize young people not only as peer educators but to also place them in formal leadership positions within organizational hierarchies.
- **Create a safe place for sexual minority youth:** Intensify efforts to reach sexual minority youth and counteract society's numerous negative messages experienced by this population. Recognize that many youth are not "out" to their parents and that they seek support and validation from other sources. Design programs and support social networks that address a wide range of topics of interest to sexual minority youth (e.g., politics, sexuality, HIV) so that they may feel safe expressing themselves and can develop healthy self-esteem and life skills.

- **Engage parents:** Offer ongoing programs to build parent capacity to address HIV risk with children. Parent programs may focus on HIV risk exclusively or address HIV in the larger context of youth health. The marketing and content of parent programs should be responsive to the prevailing cultural norms in each community (e.g., some parents might find a program on “healthy youth” more acceptable than a program about “youth and HIV”). Increase the accessibility of parent-oriented programs by scheduling them outside of traditional work hours, providing programs in the workplace, and offering incentives.
- **Involve churches:** Leverage the role of the church as an influential community institution when possible. Meet with church leaders to assess their views on HIV and sexuality and identify opportunities to address HIV in the church context (e.g., distribute churches fans with HIV information or encourage pastors to get tested in front of the congregation). Foster dialogue between public health and church stakeholders to discuss philosophical differences in the hopes of reconciling differences, establishing common ground, and developing a unified message.
- **Address stigma:** Incorporate issues of stigma into existing youth programs and create new initiatives to help service providers, policy makers, and community members recognize and address the contextual role of stigma in the lives of youth related to race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and HIV.
- **Tailor programs to sub-cultures of youth:** Recognize that youth culture is not monolithic and that there are many distinct youth sub-cultures. Require programs to describe the nuances of their intended target population and ensure that programs and resources are aligned with distinct youth sub-cultures cultures.
- **Enhance the portfolio of Effective Behavioral Interventions (EBIs):** Allow greater latitude to modify EBIs to be appropriate for youth and identify additional youth-focused interventions to expand the current EBI portfolio. Support additional youth-oriented interventions that are theoretically based, culturally appropriate, responsive to needs identified in youth community assessments, and that utilize a youth development approach.
- **Build provider capacity:** Convene national and local conferences of providers and youth to provide a forum for discussion and trainings on cross-cultural issues related to HIV and affected communities. Hire linguistically and culturally competent staff at health departments and community based organizations (CBOs) that can relate to youth and the issues confronting communities of color.
- **Encourage collaboration:** Require collaboration among grantees as a condition of funding and, in turn, make it easier for grantees to share programmatic and evaluation data with each other by better coordinating the types of data they are required to collect and report to their respective funding agencies. Explore other opportunities for strengthening collaboration and reducing service duplication by forming a community calendar to better coordinate efforts directed toward youth

and HIV, engaging youth-serving organizations not traditionally considered part of the HIV service infrastructure, integrating HIV prevention messages into other health department and CBO youth services, and broadening the focus of HIV prevention programs to address related youth needs such as mental health, sexual abuse, substance abuse, violence, and homelessness.

- **Use media and communications strategies:** Seek opportunities to disseminate HIV prevention messages through media and communication channels popular in youth culture such as text messaging, music, movies, and television.
- **Evaluate programs:** Use funding mechanisms to require and adequately support health department and CBO evaluation efforts. Formative evaluation should be used to ensure programs well are aligned with youth needs and process and outcome evaluation should be conducted to monitor the quality of services provided and their effect on youth risk.
- **Support comprehensive sexuality education in schools:** Collaborate with state-level policy makers to establish a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum and include health proficiency in state assessment tests.

ADVOCACY TRAINING

The meeting also included an opportunity for participants to educate legislators about issues impacting youth of color in their respective jurisdictions. Staff from NASTAD's Government Relations Program provided an overview of the current policy landscape of HIV/AIDS and led participants through a series of interactive exercises designed to increase their effectiveness in advocating on behalf of youth of color issues.

ACTION PLANNING

After the breakout discussions, state teams caucused to share the ideas developed in their respective breakout groups, prioritize the strategies they wanted to pursue collaboratively after the meeting, and develop a one-year action plan specifying tasks, responsibilities, and timelines to implement their selected priority strategies.

EVALUATION

The meeting concluded with a brief self-administered evaluation survey. The findings were very positive; participants indicated a high level of satisfaction with the meeting and expressed strong interest in attending a follow-up meeting on this topic in the future. The complete evaluation results are included in Attachment B.

MEETING FOLLOW UP AND NEXT STEPS

NASTAD developed the follow-up plan seen on page 6 to ensure that participants received adequate support to facilitate the implementation of their state action plans and to provide a mechanism to help participants benchmark their progress.

Three Months: Conduct a conference call with meeting participants to determine the progress of the state action plans developed during the March 2007 meeting.

Six Months: Conduct a conference call with meeting participants to determine the progress of the state action plans developed during the March 2007 meeting.

Ten Months: Conduct a state-team sharing and technical assistance call. The purpose of this call is twofold. The primary function is to provide state teams with the opportunity to reconnect with other meeting participants to both share the successes and challenges of implementing their state action plans and to solicit feedback from their peers. The secondary purpose is to provide participants with technical assistance around a theme or topic that emerged universally during the two prior follow-up calls.

Twelve Months: Conduct a web-based survey to evaluate the technical assistance and follow-up provided during the 12 months following the March 2007 meeting.

Attachment A: Meeting Agenda



Focus on Youth and HIV AIDS: Defining and Agenda for Youth of Color March 12-14, 2007

Objectives

By the end of this meeting, participants will be able to:

- Describe the epidemiology of HIV among youth of color
- Identify major challenges to providing HIV prevention programs to youth of color
- Name strategies to increase the focus on HIV prevention among youth of color
- Explain the role of CDC's Health Disparities workgroup
- Describe an action plan to increase the focus on HIV prevention among youth of color in their state

Monday, March 12

8:30 – 9:00	Registration and Refreshments
9:00 – 9:45	Setting the Stage
9:45 – 10:15	Seeing the Big Picture
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 12:30	Defining Our Challenges
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 2:30	Making Our Voices Heard (Part 1)
2:30 – 2:45	Break
2:45 – 4:45	Developing Strategies
4:45 – 5:00	Closing
6:30	Reception and Dinner

Tuesday, March 13

8:30 – 9:00	Refreshments
9:00 – 10:00	Making Our Voices Heard (Part 2)
10:00 – 10:45	Learning about CDC DASH Health Disparities Workgroup
10:45 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 12:30	Influencing Policy Makers – Advocacy Training
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch
1:30 – 3:00	Planning for Action
3:00 – 3:15	Break
3:15 – 4:45	Learning about Scenarios USA
4:45 – 5:00	Closing

Wednesday, March 14

8:30 – 9:00	Refreshments
9:00 – 12:00	Education on Capitol Hill
12:00 – 1:30	Lunch and Debrief
1:30 – 2:00	Closing and Evaluation

Attachment B: Evaluation Results

A self-administered evaluation survey was completed by participants at the end of the meeting. The evaluation results are presented below.

1. Please rate the quality of each of the sessions listed below.

	Mean Score	Excellent 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1
Monday					
Setting the Stage (n=24)	3.54	13	11		
Seeing the Big Picture (n=23)	3.57	14	8	1	
Defining Our Challenges (n=24)	3.83	20	4		
Making Our Voices Heard-Part 1 (n=24)	3.79	19	5		
Developing Strategies (n=24)	3.71	17	7		
Tuesday					
Making Our Voices Heard-Part 2 (n=24)	3.83	20	4		
Learning about CDC DASH Health Disparities Workgroup (n=24)	3.04	7	11	6	
Influencing Policy Makers Session (n=21)	3.52	11	10		
Planning for Action (n=23)	3.65	15	8		
Learning about Scenarios USA (n=24)	3.71	17	7		
Wednesday					
Educating Policy Makers on the Hill (n=9)	3.56	5	4		
Closing and Evaluation (n=8)	3.25	3	4	1	

2. Please rate the overall quality of the meeting. (n=23)

Mean Score	Excellent 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1
3.61	14	9		

3. How will this meeting help your team better meet the HIV/AIDS prevention needs of youth of color?

- It's been helpful to model a process that assists ASOs in identifying specific challenges and barriers and then goals and action steps to over them. It will help us to strategize about what our specific local needs are and then come up with a time to meet goals.
- This meeting has allowed our delegation to really inventory our youth programs; identify the paucity and develop a blue print to address our programs for youth.
- Bringing attention and focus to this population; seeing the urgency and need; meeting with others from around the state.
- Our Action Plan includes a mechanism for continued discussion among adolescent HIV prevention service programs in the state on cultural barriers regarding youth of color. This should help programs with their service delivery.
- The action planning/challenges and barriers segments were extremely helpful in terms of recognizing what needs to be done and figuring out ways on how to execute them.
- Helped us look at overarching challenges faced in other states then apply it to our state situation. Also allowed us to dedicate time we never seem to be able to do otherwise to look at one issue. Also to develop an action plan.
- By focusing on the issue and creating a plan to take back to the state will be the foundation to create the action plan involving others.
- We have the beginnings of an action plan. New resources/info to support our programs.
- Unsure.
- Help create cross collaboration between organizations; Have a chance to be proactive and solution-oriented instead of being reactive; Clearer picture of youth of color services locally (individual programs) and by state.
- It has allowed us to come together with a focus on solving issues rather than create.
- We return with tangible goals and action steps.
- Yes – it has helped us develop some action steps for better involving youth in prevention planning.

- It was invaluable to come together and be guided through a structured process to plan.
- I liked the process of carrying out decisions and brainstorming. This strategy helps engage everyone and I felt it was extremely important.
- Provided our team with the skill sets to better serve the youth of color population in Kentucky.
- It allowed us to interact and glean information from other parts of the country. Then we were allowed to focus on how to meet our challenges.
- It has addressed issues that needed answers. What we learned will be put to good use.
- Let us know that some of us are on the right track when it comes to youth.
- There were very good ideas that were brought to our attention from the youth and providers. "Sharing my knowledge and best practices."

4. What did you like most about the meeting?

- The meeting was excellent. I really enjoyed being in a participatory environment and having an opportunity to work with my local health department in developing ways to address our challenges collectively.
- The entire meeting was invaluable.
- I liked the atmosphere and general attitude of the meeting. The facilitator was very good; the food was excellent; liked meeting people from other states.
- Chance to think about the issue without work interruptions.
- What I most liked about the meeting was the "Making Our Voices Heard" segment. It was interesting and exciting to see HIV Prevention programs within states other than my own.
- The opportunity to meet individuals from other states and talk with them about the work they are doing with youth of color.
- Able to focus on one issue, looking at common issues then talk out before making state action plan.
- Taking a plan back to the state, follow-up.
- Interactive, hands-on, results-driven, well-organized, friendly staff, food.
- Networking with national groups. Strengthening relationships with other local organization in state.
- Interactive sections – by coming together with other programs, get a better understanding of the challenges/solutions they've found most useful. Food was great. Organization flowed, one of the best run conferences I've attended.
- CDC presentation and setup.
- Youth presentations.
- Being able to caucus with people in my state and other around the specific topic of youth and HIV.

- The “Planning for Action” session.
- “Defining Our Challenges” session.
- 1) The organized planning process; 2) Opportunity to hear about current programs in other areas; 3) The opportunity to network with program staff from other states...priceless; 4) Well-organized and planned gathering! Thank you!
- I love organization and presentation and it definitely was wonderful. I also like the fact that the trainers weren’t non-accessible to us, and they were more than glad to answer questions and help us understand things. I also like the different variety of interest in subject matters.
- The break-out session – I really enjoyed dialoging with the other service providers from other states to hear their thoughts in a smaller session to brainstorm. Also, it provided for interesting education lesson about strategies that may/may not be working in certain situations.
- The small group sessions, especially mixing up the states.
- The interaction between the various groups; also the focus leader, David, and the staff.
- I really liked break-out sessions. It really gave me the opportunity to see what other states’ needs are and they are so match with some of the same situations.
- The youth panel.
- Hearing from the youth; their programs and their stories. Scenarios and meeting the face behind the script – Jermaine was excellent.

5. What did you like least about the meeting?

- Having the Hill visits on the last day instead of the second day.
- I thought the Hill visits should not have been scheduled on the last day of the meeting. Hauling luggage was a nightmare.
- Carrying the luggage to NASTAD the last day and all the dead time before meeting with the “Hill folk.”
- Not sure of Hill visit component.
- The segment on the CDC statistics was what I least liked – mainly because I believe that most statistics are skewed and the explanation of sample size is overlooked.
- Needs to be longer – to give us more time together.
- Schedule was a little tight – not enough time to meet as team. Seems would have been better to have Hill visits on second day so didn’t have to bring luggage – maybe do state action plans on last day.
- Hotel.
- Long days.

- Were asked to plan for action and only scheduled 1 hour. For most of us it was the first time we had a chance to sit down all together and talk about our programs. Would have liked to have a chance to sit and brainstorm more.
- Not enough time to discuss the walk to Capitol Hill.
- I wish there would have been more young people.
- I would have really liked to see more youth present.
- The CDC/DASH presentation was good but a little too much information for me to take in.
- No youth.
- I liked all of it.
- Very long for so much information.
- Too long of a day. Better to either start on Sunday or end on Thursday and have days end no later than 3:00pm.
- The long days.
- Too packed of an agenda.

6. Do you want to participate in a follow up meeting of this group next year?

(n=23)

Yes = 23 No = 0

If “Yes,” what other issues related to HIV prevention for youth of color would you like addressed?

- More analysis of cultural barriers and discussion of culturally-relevant models/adaptations of models and programs.
- Addressing youth that are infected.
- Substance abuse; gender identity issues.
- Youth development and youth of color.
- Specifically culture; Caribbean youth of color.
- Latino, other subpopulations. Victor Medrano (CDC) pointed out the emphasis on African Americans and not other populations.
- More discussion regarding invigorating youth development into programming.
- More on MSM of color communities!!
- Finding more money in other ways; skills building for CBOs.
- Plan of action for youth of color whom already know their HIV-positive status; Positive for Prevention and Prevention for Positives.
- Sex work, homelessness, domestic violence.
- Youth involvement in prevention planning; Youth leadership development and mentoring programs.
- Mental health; resources. Housing for youth with HIV after age 24.

- I'd like to see youth empowerment discussions as it relates to issues of poverty or poor education.
- Collaborating more with the schools.
- How to establish youth conferences; resources for getting youth to national conferences.
- Hands-on interventions/partnership with other youth programs including pregnancy, violence, drug rehabilitation, etc.
- Leadership development; Employment/vocational training; Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

7. Should this type of meeting be repeated for other states? (n=22)

Yes = 22 No = 0

8. What else do you want to tell us?

- This was a wonderful opportunity and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Thanks for the opportunity.
- Good meeting!
- Thanks for everything. The experience was very informative and nice.
- Thank you.
- I really appreciate the work that NASTAD is doing in the fight against HIV/AIDS.
- Thank you for creating a forum for amazing, talented, youth service veterans to get together and be real about the barriers/challenges youth of color and programs face. A rare opportunity.
- Food, hotel, and activities were great.
- I think by holding this on weekdays it prevents youth who are in school from attending. Maybe it should be: Friday evening - arrival, Saturday and Sunday – workgroups, Monday-Hill visits.
- I felt the CDC/DASH presentation was repetitive and outdated because it presented similar information that was presented in the “Big Picture” session and some of the data was from 2004. I would really like those at the table to reflect more significantly those who the meeting is focused on (i.e., youth, youth of color). I would like my state and others to be proactive in ensuring that the youth voice is represented at the table and not by one or two, but have each state represented. Overall I was satisfied with the meeting and happy to see that there are like-minded individuals across the country even from the Red states.
- Perhaps it would work better to have participants involved in scheduling Hill visits. It's sometimes easier to make appointments if constituents are the ones who make the calls.
- Thank you! Excellent work groups! Excellent facilitators and presenters!
- This type of meeting should be repeated for other states only if the same facilitators are available – but I think Washington is the relevant place for what

we are accomplishing. I appreciate this opportunity and I would like to be a part of this much more. Please keep me in mind and in consideration for anything upcoming.

- Wonderful job, the staff and participants were both great!
- It's been a pleasure to meet and work with NASTAD.
- It was just a little too long.
- NASTAD has become an excellent model for demonstrating how regional meetings should happen.