

Community Needs Assessment Overview

Young people, Black/African-American, and LGBTQ+ populations, are at highest risk for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Buffalo, NY. CAI recruited and convened a Community Advisory Board (CAB) with nine African-American straight and LGBTQ+ identifying adolescents, ages 18-24, to utilize a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach to identify community-driven solutions that address social determinants of health (SDH) in their community.

The Process

The CAB implemented this community needs assessment (CNA) from February-May 2018.

CAI and Via Evaluation provided training and support to build the CAB's skills and self-efficacy to conduct the CNA.

Trainings covered:

- CBPR methods
 - Community Café facilitation
 - Community mapping
 - Focus groups
 - Videography sessions
 - Interviews
- The socio-ecological model
- Research ethics and skills, such as using open ended questions and explaining consent to participants.

The CAB developed research questions and planned and collected data. The questions included in the CNA were:

- What is causing high STI rates in our community?
- What are the sexual health stigma in our community?
- What does the community know about STIs?

The CAB enjoyed the experience, and many stated that implementing the CNA was one of the most memorable and important experiences during the project's first year.

The Results

Through the CNA, the CAB reached 42 individuals (52% were young people):

- Students
- Parents
- Policy-makers
- Healthcare providers

And implemented 13 activities:

- 1 Community café
- 2 Community-mapping sessions
- 2 Focus groups
- 2 Videography sessions
- 6 Interviews

Key findings revealed gaps in STI awareness and knowledge in the community: inconsistent information; lack of sexual health champions; feelings of being disconnected to healthcare due to limited access, misinformation, and stigma.

WHAT IS CAUSING HIGH STI RATES IN OUR COMMUNITY?



WHAT DID THE CAB FIND?



According to the Community...

3 MAJOR THEMES

LIMITED ACCESS TO RESOURCES, EDUCATION, AND KNOWLEDGE ARE CAUSING HIGH STI RATES



ACCESS TO RESOURCES IS DIFFICULT

“ I think the locations of the HIV centers (are a factor). They’re all downtown. There should be a center on Bailey...the kids’ll probably get there faster because of transportation. ”
– House Mother



THERE IS LOW KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES, WHICH COULD BE CAUSED BY INSUFFICIENT COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING.

“ Just the fact I couldn’t name a lot of places to go (for testing) shows a lapse in the information. It may be out there, but it’s not advertised as well as it needs to be. ”
– College Student #1



THE COMMUNITY REPORTED INADEQUATE SEX EDUCATION

“ I went through my whole schooling career and only took two health classes. Even in those classes, no one taught me how to put on a condom. ”
– College Student #2

“ I learned about them (STIs) from the internet. People would post on facebook that so and so has something. When I saw the disease I would look it up. ”
– 17 Year Old Teen Parent.



YOUTH ARE NOT GETTING TESTED FOR MANY REASONS INCLUDING:

• STIGMA

“ There’s such a stigma around getting tested and going to the doctor and clinics in the black community. ”
– College Student

“ One of the classroom curriculum asks, “Who gets an STI?” and a common answer is “nasty” people. Also, parents have been known to say you don’t have to worry about that (STIs) if you don’t sleep around. ”
– Community Health Educator

• YOUTH PERCEIVE LOW RISK OF HARM

• FEAR OF POSITIVE STI RESULT

“ I think (the fear of a positive result) is a massive fear, to look yourself in the mirror and come to grips with what you have or what you may have done” or what you may have to tell your partner. “No one really wants to look at themselves and say this happened to me. ”
– College Student #3

• SOME STIs ARE ASYMPTOMATIC

“ People say, ‘I know my body’ but they don’t know you can have no symptoms. ”
– African-American Young Man Who Has Sex With Men.

AS REPORTED BY THE COMMUNITY, THE YOUTH MOST VULNERABLE TO STIs INCLUDE:

- Young Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Young People of color

- Young People of color living in poverty
- Young People of color affected by social determinants of health

“ They (young people) wanna have sex! They don’t care about no condom. ”
– Sex Worker

“ Organizations aren’t effectively reaching out to (Black) youth to help them. They’re forced to depend on learning from other young people they know. ”
– Community Health Professional

“ The number one answer (we get for why youth don’t use condoms) is that they didn’t have them. (They say) ‘I didn’t have one. If I had one, I would’ve use it,’ or ‘I didn’t think about it.’ ”
– HOPE Buffalo Community Action Team Member

WHAT ARE THE SEXUAL HEALTH STIGMA IN OUR COMMUNITY?



WHAT DID THE CAB FIND?

According to the Community... 5 MAJOR THEMES



TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL HEALTH IS TABOO AND UNCOMFORTABLE. PEOPLE DON'T TALK ABOUT SEX AND STIs AT HOME, AMONG FRIENDS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

- STIs ARE NOT REGULARLY DISCUSSED IN GENERAL HEALTH CARE SETTINGS

“When people post questions like ‘Hey, does anyone know anything about (PrEP?)’, the core group of people in this community (house mothers, MSM of color in the sexual health field) go like ‘Girl, here they go with that again,’ instead of saying ‘Let me get a part of this conversation.’ (People) need to see the faces they look up to responding to those conversations.

– House Mother

When you travel to other cities like Atlanta, Houston, or Miami, there are popular people, community leaders that are openly HIV+ and proud about it, advocates leading the charge to change. In Buffalo, it's not like that...you can't put a relatable face to it.

– House Mother

Many people in the community don't really talk about [sexual health] much. Rarely anymore. It seems like it's not even important these days.

– Sex Worker



THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BY GENDER

- YOUNG WOMEN SEEM TO BE MORE COMFORTABLE GETTING TESTED, TREATED, AND DISCUSSING STIs

“(My friends) aren't comfortable at all (getting tested and treated for STIs). I had one friend tell me he would rather live with HIV/AIDS than have to figure out he has is it and deal with it.”

– Male-identifying College Student

“I think it might be a little easier to have the conversation together as women because we don't have to deal with that need, that machismo.”

– Female-identifying College Athlete #1

- THERE ARE DOUBLE STANDARDS (E.G. SLUT SHAMING, PEER PRESSURE AMONG AA MALES THAT “CONDOM SEX IS WHACK”, SEX DISCUSSED AS A CONQUEST, MEN (ESPECIALLY GAY MEN) THINKING CONDOMS ARE ONLY FOR PREVENTING PREGNANCY, ETC.)

“Socially, there's this attitude of slut shaming, especially when women want to embrace their sexuality...I think it's from a lack of understanding or willingness to go out and learn about these things.”

– Female-identifying College Athlete #2



THERE IS A SERIOUS STIGMA

SURROUNDING STIs AND STI + PEOPLE

- SLANG IS USED TO DESCRIBE PEOPLE HAVING AN STI AND/OR HIV

“They say (men with HIV) are sick, have the monster, got collard greens, are pregnant, and are carrying a package so they ‘work for the post office’.”

– Young MSM of Color

- SOME OLDER COMMUNITY MEMBERS BELIEVE THAT STIGMA IS DECREASING DUE TO INCREASED SEXUAL HEALTH INFORMATION

“I think stigma has gone down because of the Buffalo Challenger (Historical Black Local Newspaper) has printed a lot about sexual health.”

– Community Elder #2



TEENS ARE PERCEIVED AS MORE LIKELY TO LACK SELF-EFFICACY, FEEL STIGMA AND BE IN DENIAL ABOUT STIs

“When you're young, you don't have any fear...it'll happen to somebody else. It can't happen to me.”

– Community Elder #1

- YOUTH ARE PERCEIVED AS LAZY, LACKING PLANNING SKILLS, AND ABILITY TO ADVOCATE FOR THEMSELVES
- COMMUNITY MEMBERS REPORTED YOUTH NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-WORTH, THAT TAKING CARE OF YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH IS A PART OF LOVING YOURSELF
- IT DOESN'T SEEM IMPORTANT/IT'S NOT DISCUSSED



CHANGE IS SLOWLY HAPPENING... BUT WE STILL HAVE WORK TO DO

- ✓ DIFFERENT STIs MAY HAVE MORE OR LESS STIGMA ASSOCIATED WITH THEM
- ✓ ELDERS DISCUSSED HOW HIV USED TO BE A DEATH SENTENCE AND HOW THEY NO LONGER LOOKED AT IT THAT WAY
- ✓ THERE IS MORE OF A FOCUS ON GETTING STIs TREATED (VS. HOW THEY WERE ACQUIRED)
- ✓ INSTEAD OF BEING VIEWED AS DIRTY, A COUPLE PARTICIPANTS DISCUSSED THE IDEA OF CALLING STI+ INDIVIDUALS AS SURVIVORS

WHAT DOES THE COMMUNITY KNOW ABOUT STIs?



WHAT DID THE CAB FIND?

According to the Community...

6 MAJOR THEMES



PEOPLE LEARN ABOUT STIs FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES

- OLDER PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET INFORMATION FROM THEIR DOCTOR
- MOST YOUNG PEOPLE GET INFORMATION FROM SCHOOL AND FRIENDS, AND NOT THE BROADER COMMUNITY



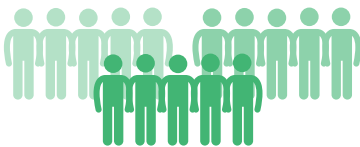
THE COMMUNITY REPORTS SIGNIFICANT INEQUITY IN SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

“ There’s a lack of education of STI prevention and safe sex in the schools, and they’re mostly attended by minority students. Right now, sex education only happens in 7th and 9th grade. It needs to be continued throughout high school. ”

– College Student #2

“ It’s segregated here (Buffalo, NY). People only know what’s in the area they live in. The Eastside (primarily African-American) doesn’t have a lot of resources. ”

– Community Health Professional



BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH AND LGBTQ + COMMUNITIES ARE MOST AT-RISK

“ I don’t believe that condom sex is heavily promoted within the black community...it’s cooler to have sex unprotected. ”

– College Student #3



THERE IS STILL A LOT OF INCORRECT INFORMATION AND MYTHS ABOUT STIs

“ I don’t believe that people really know what an STD or an STI really is until it happens to them. ”

– College Student #1

People still think HIV has a look. ‘This person looks like they have HIV.’ It doesn’t have a look. This isn’t the 80’s no more...too many people rely on social media for education.

– Young Men Who Have Sex With Men of Color ”



THERE IS A WELL-KNOWN PHENOMENON THAT BECAUSE YMSMOC ARE STIGMATIZED AS HAVING HIGHER RATES OF STIs THEY ARE FORCED TO HAVE A MUCH SMALLER DATING POOL

“ I can’t be picky. ”

– 19 Year Old Young Man Who Have Sex With Men of Color ”



THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT “SAFE SEX IS NO SEX” BUT THEY REPORT KNOWLEDGE OF THE FOLLOWING SAFER SEX

- STRATEGIES:
 - ✓ Use a condom
 - ✓ Get regular testing
 - ✓ Get verbal consent from your partner
 - ✓ Examine your partner’s body
 - ✓ Converse with your partner about your status
 - ✓ If you treat everyone like they’re STI+, you’ll prepare and act much safer