Study Team and Partners

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Aims

• **Aim 1:** Continue studying the implementation process of newly developed PrEP-enhanced Mpowerment activities at three organizations designed to improve PrEP uptake, adherence, and persistence among YBLMSM (Youngish Black and Latino MSM), and evaluate the PrEP-enhanced MP activities using the PDSA process;

• **Aim 2:** Continue identifying determinants (barriers and facilitators) to successful implementation of the PrEP-enhanced Mpowerment activities within the organizations following the CFIR;

• **Aim 3:** Assess the implementation strategies, mechanisms, and initial implementation outcomes of the PrEP-enhanced activities at the three organizations in different areas of Texas.
Implementation Science Methodologies

**Interviews with YBLMSM (ages 18 – 35, based on epidemiology of locations)**
- Experiences with PrEP ideas for and reactions to the new PrEP-enhanced activities (tailored to personal PrEP history)
- 2 interviews, paid $50 for first interview and $100 for the second
- 16 initial interviews conducted to date (Recruitment was more challenging than expected due to COVID and events becoming virtual).

**Interviews with staff**
- Primarily focused on PrEP implementation barriers and facilitators and community’s engagement in the PrEP-enhanced activities
- 9 conducted to date

**Implementation assessment meetings**
- Every 6 weeks with all community partners (10 meetings w/all partners; 3 agency-wide meetings)
- Discuss PDSAs, upcoming events, successes, challenges, sharing ideas

**Data analysis**
- All interviews and meetings recorded and analyzed following Framework Analytical Method
The PDSA Cycles resulted in these activities:

• 14 in-person socially focused PrEP events (20-100+ participants)
• Podcast Series (6 episodes, audience 90+)
• 3 FB Live events focused on PrEP (125-200+ attendees)
• 8 PrEP-focused outreach at clubs or community venues/events
• PrEP-related videos on IG, TikTok, and FB
• 19 FB Live events that included PrEP content, but PrEP was not the main focus
Key Outcomes from Qual Interviews with YBLMSM

- **PrEP accessibility experiences.** Preliminary results confirmed Focus Group findings, especially that PrEP was easy to access.

- **PrEP accessibility perceptions.** Most YBLMSM do not know that PrEP is easy to access, affordable, and offered in sex-positive, non-judgmental settings.

- **PrEP knowledge.** Some men, including those who had taken PrEP, had incomplete knowledge about PrEP.

- **PrEP adherence.** Participants reported high levels of adherence and use pill boxes/holders or alarms as reminders. Some thought text message reminders would also be helpful.

- **PrEP and persistence over time.** Starting and stopping PrEP was commonly mentioned. No men reported working with PrEP navigators after PrEP initiation.

- **PrEP and relationships.** Men often discontinued PrEP when they began a “monogamous” relationship (some re-started PrEP if relationship became non-monogamous). Yet sero-discordance is common. Promote that PrEP is not just for single people.

- **PrEP and condom use.** Little or no condom use among men we interviewed, even while on a break from PrEP.

- **Representation.** Desire for agencies to have more people that “look like me” on staff.
Key Outcomes from YBLMSM Interviews (2)

- **Comments about PrEP-enhanced activities:**
  - Not all in sample had participated/attended them
  - Some had participated in activities from multiple organizations
  - Appreciation of the wide-range of issues discussed
  - Sometimes felt that there wasn’t enough direct PrEP content

- **Stigma.** Though not mentioned that often, the sample might be limited by those who are positively inclined to PrEP
  - 2 community activists were taking PrEP as a political statement, “right thing to do”
  - Families and friends were generally supportive of PrEP (though some men didn’t want sexual conversations about sex w/family)
Key Outcomes from Staff Interviews/Group Mtgs

- **COVID-related disruption**
  - Widespread telecommuting has disrupted the usual communication channels
  - Collaborative processes were disrupted, making collaboration between work teams challenging
  - Considerable improvement observed from Fall 2021 to Spring 2022. Service co-location very helpful

- **Staffing.** Designing and implementing activities while attempting to involve multiple work teams within an agency is a complex and time-consuming process
  - Staff shortages and rapid staff turnover can further complicate this process

- **Organizational Mergers.** Grassroots vs. Corporate Culture

- **Immigration.** Concern that undocumented men may be missed and are worried about seeking out PrEP services
Key Outcomes (Staff interviews/Groups 2)

• **PrEP Continuum.** Activities more focused on PrEP uptake than on PrEP adherence or persistence. Promoting HIV testing is a common way to increase PrEP referrals

• **Language.** Clinical services available in Spanish but need for more Spanish language publicity and educational materials (Tik Toks, social media posts, influencers, online ads). Not reaching monolingual Spanish-speakers

• **Pharmacies.** Play a key role delivering PrEP smoothly—especially when they conduct the benefits counseling, thus freeing navigator time for other focus. Co-location with clinic is an advantage

• **Clinicians.** Time with clinicians is precious and patients make the most out of the time by asking about multiple health issues. Clinicians supportive of education, prevention, social activities, but little time to discuss with patients
Discussion: Getting to the Next Level

• What were the challenges?
  • Impact of COVID can’t be underestimated
  • Staffing challenges
    • Turnover at supervisor and front line-staff level
    • Involving the “right” people, and “enough” people at each organization
    • Too few people are left doing everything

• How we addressed those challenges?
  • Ongoing training to bring new staff up to speed and emphasizing importance of integrating PrEP messaging into Mpowerment activities
  • Created PDSA worksheets to support implementation and provide institutional memory
  • Held 21 individual meetings with staff in multiple roles to discuss:
    • The history of the collaboration/grant
    • Grant goals and objectives
    • What activities qualified for invoicing
    • Invoicing mechanisms so they could implement and get reimbursed for PrEP enhanced activities.
Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Mpowerment methods can be used to focus on PrEP uptake, adherence, and persistence among YBLMSM (more work needed to reach monolingual Spanish-speaking men)
- The community partners have stressed the importance of being **extra patient and gentle with them and clients** during COVID pandemic
- PDSAs seemed to work alright (sites don’t like extra paperwork, but became adept at it; the idea of small, cyclical tests of change, and critical analysis of process, is a feasible implementation strategy)
- While very challenging, the last 2+ years have also been a time of considerable institutional innovation, flexibility, and dynamic growth
- This project created an opportunity for three organizations to learn from and support each other, which they appreciated
- Expecting the unexpected has become the norm due to COVID surges and climate events
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