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Engaging youth in HIV/STD prevention: Hartford Youth HIV Identification & Linkage (HYHIL) Consortia

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The Hartford Youth HIV Identification and Linkage consortia is a clinically and cost effective efficacious HIV/STD prevention approach that promotes, as well as, ameliorate underlying social risk factors that can result in poor outcomes to reaching high risk and vulnerable youth. Community engagement and pooling of resources are essential processes in the implementation of high impact prevention particularly as landscape changes in both the health care and HIV service ecosystems. Existing CDC data estimates that every year 10 million new sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, occur among youth, costing the nation almost \$16 billion in health care costs every year. Early detection of HIV/STD is crucial to the overall well-being of youth in the US today. The Hartford Youth HIV Identification & Linkage Consortia (HYHIL) uses an innovative, evidence informed approach to increase early identification of HIV/STD positive youth. HYHIL works to increase prevention, education and awareness and to link youth to health care and employment services. HYHIL was formed in 1999 by UConn Health and the Connecticut Children's Medical Center. As a result of the success of collaborative efforts of many agencies and people, HYHIL has reached over 40,000 youth, in both school and community settings. Those youth have received HIV/STD education and/or screenings, and have produced a 10% positivity rate for STDs during the targeted interventions. Agencies within the community that serve at risk youth work together with community agencies that provide HIV/STD testing and linkage to care. This collaboration can effectively educate youth, while identifying those infected with HIV and providing necessary treatment and interventions. Collaboration along with the pooling of resources is a cost effective and a key component in the successful implementation of the HYHIL model. HYHIL operates as a comprehensive coalition that can effectively ensure that youth have access to and benefit from seamless care coordination.

This abstract presents the HYHIL model in hopes that it can work to benefit youth in other communities to increase access to adolescent health care services, improve early identification of HIV/STD positive youth and reduce health care costs. We will explore how the collaborative operates, the structural requirements needed to sustain it and the social impact of replicating the HYHIL model in other gravely affected areas.

Biography

Nilda Fernandez is a Social Worker, Community Health Specialist and passionate Advocate. She specializes in medical case management services with children, youth and women impacted by HIV/AIDS. She is interested in academic work, grant writing and translation projects and has keen interest in entrepreneurial initiatives in behavioral health, consulting initiatives and public policy.

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