Engaging Women Who Have Sex With Women: Our Vision and Model Approach to Ending AIDS by 2020

Iris House-Just For Us Program
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In Our Own Voices
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Agenda

- Iris House and In Our Own Voices Program Overview
- Importance of HIV, STI, HCV and PrEP for WSW- Ending the AIDS Epidemic by AIDS 2020
- Sexversations: Talk about Sex
- Safer Sex and WSW- To Dildo or Not to Dildo
- Gender Roles/Norms and HIV Prevention
- Closure
At Iris House...We Save Lives

COMMEMORATING 22 YEARS

March 2, 1993. Iris House saves lives through comprehensive support, prevention and education services for women, families, and underserved populations affected by HIV/AIDS and other health disparities in a safe, family-centered environment by passionate, professional and culturally competent staff. Named for Latina HIV Activist Iris De La Cruz- we are grateful for her vision to making sure the women of her community were not without options or resources. We honor her legacy today.
In Our Own Voices

- Mission Needed: To work for and ensure the physical, mental, spiritual, political, cultural and economic survival and growth of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of color communities.
Generally lesbians are at low risk of HIV infection, however they are vulnerable to certain sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) as women who have sex with men.

Self-reported viral STD rates were significantly higher among bisexual women (15.0% to 17.2%) than among lesbians (2.3% to 6.7%). Heterosexual transmission places them at high-risk.
HIV/AIDS, Lesbian and Bisexual Queer Women’s Risk Factors

- **Oral sex** - risk is low, but increased if partner receiving oral sex has sores on her genitals or is having her period.

- **Sharing sex toys** - sharing sex toys can be risky if they have vaginal fluids, blood or faeces on them.

- **Rough sex** - any sexual activity that can lead to bleeding or cuts/breaks in the lining of vagina or anus is risky, including 'fisting' activities.

- **Donor insemination** – need donor's detailed medical history - including drug use and sexual history. It is important that the donor has taken an HIV test.
Program Overview

- Provide HIV/STI/Hepatitis C services to African American and Latina Lesbian and bisexual adolescents and women who are HIV-positive or at high-risk.

- Funded by The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute.

- Iris House and In Our Own Voices are the ONLY two organizations funded in NYC and NYS; Grant started December 1, 2011
Integration of Services: HIV, STI and Hepatitis C Testing

1. Know your status
2. Linkage to Care/Navigation Services for those with positive and or reactive results
3. Referrals to supportive Services and PrEP/PEP
Our Space, Our Face
In Our Own Voices, Inc.
Why Our Space, Our Face?
Services Provided: Outreach, testing, community engagement, groups, interventions.
Sexversations

for Womyn Who Love Women (All Ages)

Join us for a night of sexversations around orgasms, consent, power play, kink and overall sexual health. Bring your appetite for self-love, mental stimulation and sharing in community.

For more information, please contact 518-432-4188 or gsantos@inourownvoices.org.

The program is funded by the NYSDOH AIDS Institute, HIVSTWep. C prevention services for women who have sex with women.
Safer Sex and WSW- To Dildo or Not to Dildo

- Activity and Demonstration on Safer Sex/Latex Barriers

- Power of the P= sexual health, sexuality, sexual orientation
Gender Roles/Norms and HIV Prevention

- A discussion on gender roles and norms for WSW
  - Stud versus Stud
  - Fem versus Fem
Best Practices/Lessons Learned

- Safe space for lesbian, bisexual, queer women.

- Remove stigma associated with sex, sexual preferences and sexual orientation.

- Closed nit community makes it difficulty to access lesbian, bisexual and queer girls/women.

- Prevention interventions tailored to lesbian, bisexual and queer women based on their sexual orientation and coming out experiences.
Best Practices/Lessons Learned

- Offer access to HIV, HCV and STI testing
- Offer Referrals to PrEP/PEP and supportive services
- Linkage to care and navigation services for positive women
- Address risk factors associated with WSWM behaviors.
Best Practice/Lessons Learned

- Girls/women might still be dealing with their sexual orientation and disclosure

- Engaging in high-risk behaviors with boys/men

- Building self esteem when working with women

- Reinforce decision making process and the power that girls/women hold.
Best Practices/Lessons Learned

- Holistic curriculum that addresses the social-economic factors of women.

- Address other supportive services needed such as housing, substance use, intimate partner violence, etc.

- Provide technical assistance and increase collaboration with *In Our Own Voices* our sister agency in Albany and others working with lesbians and bisexual women.
Thank You

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