



FEATURE ARTICLE

Are you SMART Enough? The Get SMART Project Phase I: Helping Emerging Adults to Make Informed Decisions

(Students/Society Mobilized and Retooled to Transform)

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Abstract

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2013, about one in four youth ages 13 -24 test positive for HIV. Most alarming is the fact that, 60% of all youth are unaware of their HIV status and unknowingly transmitting the virus to others. The Get S.M.A.R.T. Project is two-fold: (1) to prevent and reduce substance abuse (SA) and (2) to prevent the acquisition and transmission of HIV/AIDS among African American emerging adults (ages 18-24) urban settings. The Get SMART Project is guided by the Transtheoretical Model and the core elements of the Community PROMISE behavioral intervention. Additionally, a creative blend of social marketing, social media, social networking, community-based theater, and Fine Arts are incorporated in reaching emerging adults. Mixed methods data analysis revealed that emerging adults do not perceive themselves to be at risk for HIV. Alcohol and marijuana are drugs of choice. Condom use is sporadic depending on the type of sexual partner. Of concern, many emerging adults revealed early sexual debut, multiple sexual partners and opportunities for STD/HIV infection. To reduce new infection among emerging adults, we must begin to engage their voices in the response to the HIV epidemic and continue to provide evidence-based education.

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