




SPR 18th Annual Meeting

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The Value of Community Partners in Effectiveness Research

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There is growing recognition that effective prevention interventions are not achieving broad dissemination to have the intended public health impact. The PARTNERS program is an ongoing trial of adapting evidence based prevention interventions for community settings. This CDC-funded youth violence prevention initiative utilizes a community-centered, ecological approach to intervention design and is being evaluated through a randomized design. PARTNERS' implementation evaluation measures fidelity, organizational readiness, and community capacity. The underlying commitment to Community Based Participatory Research demonstrates advantages of a community-centered approach to broad scale implementation and increased benefits of community participation in program design and implementation. Results of the implementation evaluation presented here demonstrate how community partners facilitate implementation, encourage participation, and set frameworks for sustainability.

A baseline organizational assessment procedure was developed, conducted and analyzed jointly by university-based researchers and community partners to provide information about which after-school sites within the community would be most ready to adopt and implement an evidence based violence prevention program. Questions on the organizational assessment included those about ongoing programs within the site, the number and characteristics of the youth served, the infrastructure, leadership, and stability of the site, communication within the site, and caregiver/community involvement. An integrity monitoring observation system was designed through the community partnership. Community partners were instrumental in the development and application of multi-pronged methods of community mobilization for recruitment and participation.

Through the organizational assessment, seven sites were selected and all agreed to participate in the randomization protocol of the study design. Community partners have also been fully engaged in applying rigorous methods of assessing fidelity of implementation, a key challenge to the translation from school to community settings. The monitoring system was validated with youth participating in school-based aggression interventions and adapted for use in urban after-school centers to assess both therapist adherence and some aspects of the quality of intervention delivery (therapist competence and participant engagement). In the area of recruitment, community outreach workers have been instrumental in developing workshops to meet short-term needs of after-school programs while building relationships to enhance participation in intervention efforts.

The PARTNERS experience demonstrates value-added of CBPR in the effort of broad implementation of proven interventions.