

Project Overview

PALMS Project

Public Health Management Corporation

Akil Pierre & Mary Milnamow

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Who are we?

- Theater-based HIV prevention intervention in high-risk settings
- Targets primarily African American and other minority adolescents 12 to 18 years old
- Most program participants are male.
- Three two-hour sessions delivered to a group of 8 to 15 participants over a period of one week



Objectives

- **Provide clear messages to reduce risky sexual behavior**
- **Increase participants' self-efficacy to practice safer sex behaviors**
- **Empower adolescents to be proactive in protecting their sexual health**

Innovation

- **PALMS uses theater-based strategies using elements of pop culture to capture the interest of high-risk minority youth.**
- **Peer actors who model appropriate behavior.**



Innovation Con't

- **Opportunities for adolescents to actively participate in working out solutions to problems and practice skills.**
 - Condom Negotiation
 - Correct condom use
- **Intervention content and procedures can be implemented in a variety of community settings.**

History & Development

- From 1993-2003 PALMS conducted single session performances at different community sites.
- In 2003 PALMS expanded to a group level intervention consisting of three 2-hour sessions within one week.
- In 2008 service delivery was enhanced.
 - Confidential HIV Counseling, Testing, and Referral Services
 - Offer screenings, referral and treatment services for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea.

Theoretical Framework

- **Social Cognitive Theory**

- Importance of peer modeling through the process of Observational Learning in which behavior is modified through demonstration.

- **Health Belief Model**

- Increasing knowledge about HIV risk, modifying attitudes, beliefs & social norms regarding HIV & condom use, increasing self-efficacy to engage in risk reduction behaviors.

Intervention Content

- **Intervention features an improvisational play presenting situations related to sexual risk, such as:**
 - Refusing sexual coercion
 - Maintaining low-risk sexual practices with a long term partner
 - Negotiating condom use with a controlling or unwilling partner
 - Delaying the initiation of sexual activities (abstinence)
 - Consequences of unsafe sex

Session 1

- **HIV-101 educational component**
 - What is HIV?
 - How are HIV and AIDS different?
 - Modes of transmission.
 - HIV risk.
- **Present play** (4 plays have been developed)
- **Play ends with a cliff-hanger ending.**



Session 2

- **Interactive exercises and games to reinforce knowledge about HIV risk and preventive behavior.**
 - HIV-101 Jeopardy
- **Interactive discussion**
- **Role play**



Session 3

- Participants and staff interview actors in character.
- Participants propose ending to the play
- Actors finish the play
- Condom use demonstration and practice



Study Sample

- **Data collection: March 2005 – December 2006**
- **Intervention group**
 - JJC – 123 participants
 - The NET– 23 participants
- **Comparison group**
 - The NET – 143 participants
- **Total sample size – 289**

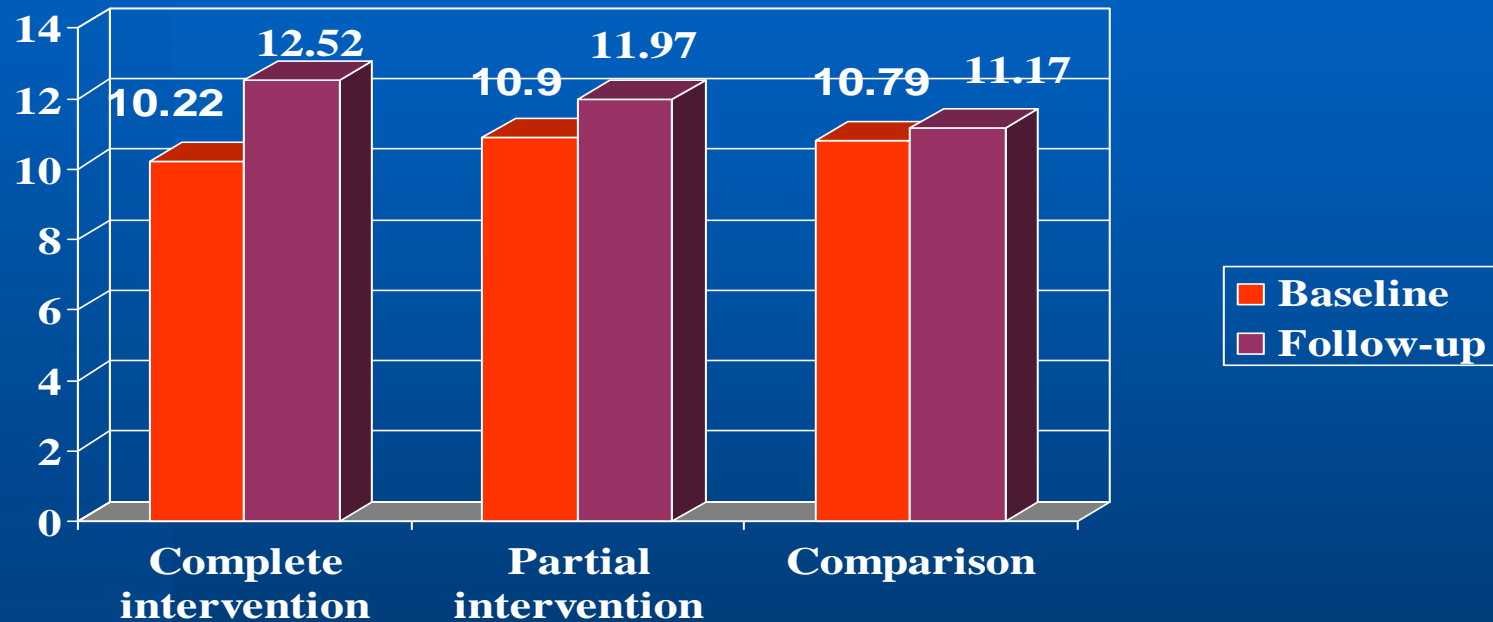
Data Collection Procedures

- **Obtained parental consent for participation in the evaluation**
- One-on-one 30-minute baseline interviews at residential facility
- **Self-administered post-test questionnaire after Session Three**
- One-on-one 6-month follow up interviews in person or over the telephone

Outcome Results

- **HIV knowledge and attitudes**
- **Sexual behaviors**

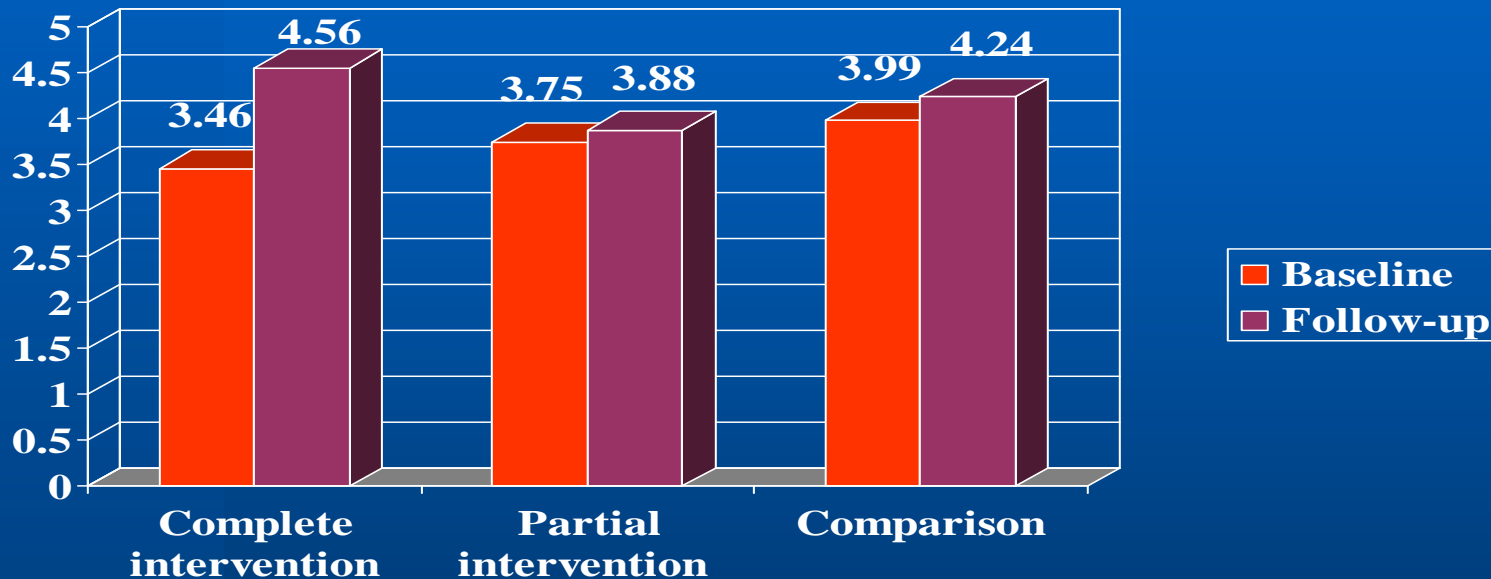
HIV knowledge* (n=233)



*Higher score indicates more correct answers or better HIV/AIDS related knowledge (true/false statements); this is a total mean score for a 14-item scale.

Controlling for age, youth who completed the full intervention exhibited higher improved HIV-knowledge scores at 6-month follow up compared to those who completed part of the intervention and those who received no intervention ($p < .001$).

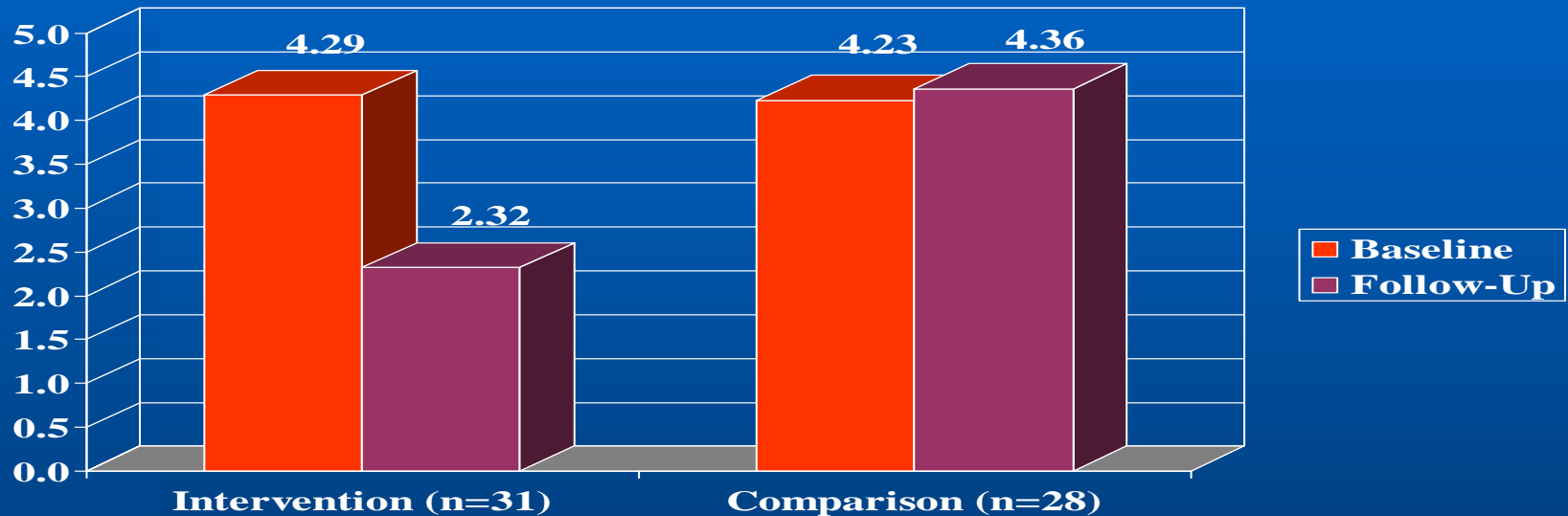
Correct condom use* (n=229)



*Higher score indicates more correct answers about how to use a condom (yes/no responses); this is a total mean score for a 5-item scale that measures correct use of condoms.

Controlling for age, youth who completed the full intervention exhibited higher improved condom use knowledge scores at 6-month follow up compared to those who completed part of the intervention and those who received no intervention ($p < .001$).

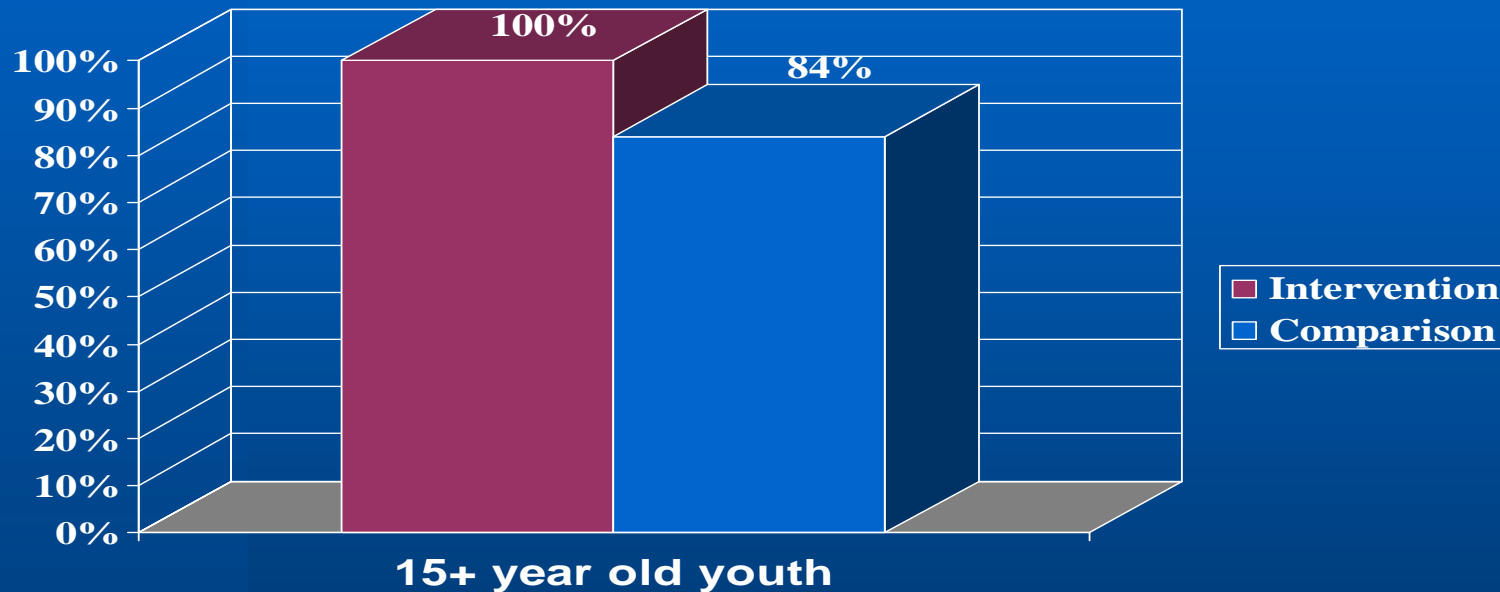
Number of sexual partners past 6 months (n=59)



15+ year old youth living at home

Intervention participants aged 15+ years old and living at home decreased their number of partners at 6-month follow up while comparison participants did not ($p=.002$). There were no intervention effects on number of partners for younger participants ages 12-14, or for participants living in an institution at follow-up.

Condom use last time with non-main partner at 6-month follow up (n=78*)



*includes 15+ year olds who had a non-main partner during the past 6 months

Among 15+ year olds, all youth in the intervention group reported using a condom the last time they had sex with a non-main partner compared to 84% of comparison youth ($p=.02$). There were no between-group differences among 12-14 year olds.

Qualitative Assessment

**KNOWLEDGE AND
BEHAVIOR CHANGE**

What behaviors did you try to change?

- **66% of youth tried to change their behaviors since attending PALMS**
 - **41% tried to use condoms more**
 - *“Always have condom with me”*
 - *“Wear condoms more/every time”*
 - **20% tried to have less sex**
 - *“Have sex with fewer partners”*
 - *“Not having oral sex with so many girls”*
 - **8% tried to have better partner relations**
 - *“Talk to partner about condoms”*
 - *“Take time to get to know someone before sex”*

What did you like the most about PALMS?

- **The actors/play**

- 70% of youth reported the actors and/or the play was their favorite part of PALMS

- *“The girls”*
- *“They came out to teach us about HIV/AIDS”*
- *“They showed interest in me”*
- *“Everyone kept it real”*
- *“Someone cared enough to come out”*
- *“Players interactive with kids—engaged kids”*

More reactions

- “Acting it out makes you really take in what you seen or heard”.
- “I liked the dedication in the group that put on the play”.
- “It was cool. I learned about real life situations when I saw the play. I could relate to the characters”.
- “The information being told. It was told to me in a way which I could enjoy through the game and the play.”

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions--Outcome Results

- **The PALMS intervention may be an effective way to decrease the number of sexual partners among older high-risk adjudicated adolescent males.**
 - **Intervention youth 15 years of age and older who were living at home at follow up reported a larger decrease in the number of sexual partners in the past 6 months compared to those in the comparison group.**
 - **At follow-up, a higher proportion of intervention group 15 years and older reported using a condom at last sex with a non-main partner compared to those in the comparison group.**
 - **The intervention did not show similar effects among youth 12-14 years of age.**

Conclusions--Evaluation

- **It is essential that evaluators work as partners with intervention providers, so that**
 - **benefits of the evaluation are understood and appreciated**
 - **evaluation measures are relevant and informative**
 - **results are used to improve intervention delivery**

Acknowledgement

■ PALMS Evaluation Team

–Jennifer Lauby, PhD

–Archana Bodas LaPollo, MPH

–Heather Batson

–Joel Lambert

Contact Information

Akil Pierre, MPH

Public Health Management Corporation

260 S. Broad St. 18th Floor

Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Tel: 215-731-2021 Email: akil@phmc.org

Mary Milnamow

Public Health Management Corporation

260 S. Broad St. 18th Floor

Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Tel: 215-985-2542 Email: marym@phmc.org