

Reviewer's report

Title: Interviews With Staff Adapting Evidence-Based Interventions for HIV Prevention

Version: 1 **Date:** 25 January 2009

Reviewer: Shawna J Lee

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To: Implementation Science Editorial Team

Re: Review of "Interviews with Staff Adapting Evidence Based Interventions for HIV Prevention"

This manuscript uses information from interviews with community organizations to understand the types of adaptations practitioners made during the process of implementing evidence-based HIV programs. As such, the research addresses several important themes relating to implementation of evidence-based practices in real world settings. The paper is well written. One strength of this paper is the use of practitioner interviews, given that much of the research on adaptation and implementation of interventions has been presented from the view of researchers.

A limitation of the manuscript is the lack of depth/ detail relating to the types of adaptations made in the process of program implementation. Given that the research is qualitative, I expected more explanation and depth regarding the type of program adaptations that were made and the process by which program administrators decided to undertake certain adaptations. For example, the authors assert on page 8 (under "Results") that "staff at agencies modified the activities and delivery methods for their interventions as recommended by CDC". However, they do not provide adequate information to support this claim, nor do they state what those CDC recommended modifications actually were. In this same paragraph, the authors state that one participant reported changes to the setting, time and/or length of training. I think many would argue that these types of changes may in fact constitute changes to the "core" element of a program. While this may not always be the case, the authors should present some information indicating how it was determined what those "core" components were, either from their perspective or from the perspectives of those who were interviewed.

Related to this, on page 9, the authors claim that "examples of reinvention in this phase were adding to or increasing the number of sessions being delivered in the interventions as required by their funders". However, I believe that many intervention developers and researchers would argue that changing the number of sessions – whether adding or deleting sessions – is likely to be a modification

to the “core” component of an intervention, not to mention an important aspect of program fidelity. Related to this, in general, any arguments regarding whether changes were made to “core” or ancillary program components would be buffered by program monitoring/ fidelity data (e.g., process notes, attendance sheets, etc) supporting such claims.

In sum, I believe this manuscript could be strengthened by greater depth and content from the participant interviews showing what adaptations were made and the thought process/ rationale behind making these program adaptations. Furthermore, it would be helpful if the authors explicitly stated what “core” program components were, and indicated what CDC criteria they were following.

Additional Points:

Methods

1) Could the authors please specify how participants were selected to participate in the study? That is, how did the authors go about identifying the 41 people who were asked to participate? Were criteria used to identify these individuals as key informants? Why were these people selected and not others?

2) Similarly, how did the authors “predetermine” what closed-ended codes to use, and why did they alternative between the 10 closed ended codes and the open ended coding scheme? A rationale for this approach would be helpful.

Tables

3) Table 1 – I would prefer that the authors present percentages rather than raw numbers.

4) Is there a way to present the information from Table 2 more efficiently? I believe that the table should be modified so that it can “stand alone” from the content of the paper. In other words, the significance and meaning of the content of the table should be clear without supporting text. I don’t believe that is presently the case.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.