

Reviewer's report

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

Version: 1 **Date:** 15 January 2009

Reviewer: Chris Carroll

Reviewer's report:

Overall comments:

This is a very interesting paper, which demonstrates an excellent understanding of the factors involved in implementation fidelity, and the necessity to measure or monitor the variables affecting this issue. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations are all very interesting and useful, but more data could have been reported to support the conclusions, and a little more analysis of the results could have been performed, to give them still greater weight. The authors correctly acknowledge that the next stage is to evaluate if and whether these modifications, and reinventions, affect outcomes – a very interesting follow-up question. There's also the question whether reinventions affect results, but modifications to key characteristics do not – which would validate the identification of the so-called “core” elements, and offer a caveat to funders. I would love to see the results of that study!

Major compulsory revisions:

None

Minor essential revisions:

1. I think more needs to be written about recruitment of the sample – it appears to be self-selecting; eg. whether or not participants were informed that their contribution would be anonymous; whether more than one participant was commenting on the same program being implemented, or whether they were reporting on 34 different programs.
2. Please say why the 3 potential participants declined to do so?
3. The authors acknowledge that limitations regarding the self-report of the sample (p.14), but to my mind this could be partly addressed in the paper. It is not clear whether the 34 participants are reporting on 34 different program implementations, or whether some participants are reporting on the same program. If the latter, and the authors have these data, then surely it is possible to check whether their reporting of what was done / not done map to one another. This would offer a validation of self-reported findings, and strengthen the overall findings, and thus conclusions, of the study. I would strongly recommend this analysis.

Discretionary revisions:

1. The Title could be more indicative, eg. How staff adapt evidence-based interventions for HIV prevention: recommendations for practice. And the Abstracts' Conclusion could begin with a sentence on the findings, eg. "Staff both modify and reinvent interventions when translating HIV prevention programs into practice. Therefore targeting technical assistance for formative evaluation should be focused . . ."

2. I think that the reporting of percentages in the Methods section (eg. on ethnicity) is unnecessary and potentially misleading given the smallness of the sample – the use of percentages suggest larger numbers.

3. Given the amount of data collected by the authors, I would like to see a few more example quotations from the transcripts, demonstrating the diversity of the modification activities coded by the authors. I think this would further strengthen the results.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

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