

It's Time to Get REAL About HIV in DC!

An Evaluation of REALtalkDC in 2008

MAY 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Metro TeenAIDS and partner organizations developed the REALtalkDC social marketing campaign to leverage the use of mixed media to increase HIV testing among youth. Combining print advertisements throughout the Washington Area Metro Transit Authority system, palm cards, sponsored HIV testing events, a text messaging service, and a website, the REALtalkDC campaign links DC's young people with HIV information and testing services that are accessible and friendly to youth. This report details findings from the pilot phases of Metro TeenAIDS youth-specific social marketing campaign REALtalkDC from its launch on June 5, 2008 through December 31, 2008.

HIGHLIGHT OF FINDINGS

- REALtalkDC campaign increases testing among young people.
- REALtalkDC campaign influences young people to get tested for HIV.
- Exposure to many kinds of campaign elements increases youths' motivation to get tested.
- Youth use text messaging to receive HIV testing information.

Metro TeenAIDS strives to ensure DC youth have the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about their sexual health and behavior. The findings detailed in this report indicate that the REALtalkDC campaign connects DC youth to HIV/STI testing information and resources, allowing youth to take control of their own health and futures. We hope this report will be useful to other organizations and government agencies in informing their work to increase HIV/STI testing among youth.

Background

HIV in DC

Washington, DC has the highest prevalence rates of HIV in the United States. A recently released report published by the District of Columbia's Department of Health publicized that 3% of Washington, DC's residents are confirmed living with HIV. In addition, the Department also estimates that up to one half of people living with HIV do not know their status.¹

It is known that 1% of young people ages 13-24 in DC are confirmed to be living with HIV in DC. In addition, 70% of HIV+ DC residents are believed to be late testers, people who are diagnosed with AIDS at the time or within one year of testing positive for HIV. This means that many people, including youth, are not connected with HIV treatment and secondary prevention services that would mitigate the impact of HIV on young people's lives.

REALtalkDC Campaign Elements

Increasing HIV testing among young people is a key step to prevent further transmissions of HIV. The REALtalkDC campaign is designed to make getting an HIV test as easy as possible through these campaign elements.

REALtalkDC Ad Campaign on Bus and Metro

REALtalkDC materials were featured in two five-week ad campaigns throughout the Washington Area Metro Transit Authority system. The first of these ad campaigns ran in the summer of 2008 between June 5 and July 9 and included interior and exterior bus signs and metro rail car signs (110 buses and 220 rail cards). The second ad campaign ran in the fall of 2008 between

The REALtalkDC campaign connects DC youth to HIV/STI testing information and resources.

October 24 and November 27 and included only interior and exterior bus signs. Because campaign materials tell readers to send text messages for more information about HIV testing sites and since there is poor cellular service in the Metro we decided not to put signs in Metro cars during the fall campaign.

REALtalkDC Print Materials

499 REALtalkDC posters were distributed throughout Washington, DC. Posters were visible at Metro TeenAIDS, REALtalkDC partner organizations, youth-friendly testing clinics, youth centers, DC public libraries and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) centers and youth-friendly businesses and schools. Members of the REALtalkDC Youth Advisory Board, youth who helped design and distribute REALtalkDC materials, distributed the REALtalkDC posters.

By the end of 2008 Metro TeenAIDS peer educators and staff distributed 20,000

REALtalkDC mini-brochures at events and in Metro TeenAIDS "safer sex" kits during street outreach activities around the city. 10,000 palm cards had similarly been distributed. Both these materials contained REALtalkDC campaign messaging, information about where to get tested for HIV, and directions to Metro TeenAIDS' Freestyle Drop-in Center. In addition to these materials, 15,000 fliers were printed and distributed to advertise for REALtalkDC testing events.

REALtalkDC New Media

Because youth use text messaging to communicate, the campaign incorporated a text messaging service for youth to find information about HIV/STI testing resources in DC. The texting allowed young people to privately access information about HIV/STI resources without needing speak to someone or access a computer. Texting information was displayed on all print REALtalkDC campaign material.

The REALtalkDC campaign also maintained a website, www.realtalkdc.org which allowed visitors to find HIV and STI testing sites in DC. The web address of the REALtalkDC website was displayed on the print materials, as well as referenced in the text messaging service. In addition, the website provided information about how to use the REALtalkDC text messaging service.

REALtalkDC Events

Metro TeenAIDS partnered with DC's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to provide HIV testing at six of DPR's "Teen Supreme Nights" and DPR's "End of Summer Party," all concert events for DC youth. Metro TeenAIDS also partnered with the Martin Luther King Jr. Library to provide testing at a youth HIV/AIDS film screening. Finally, in conjunction with World AIDS Day, Metro TeenAIDS sponsored "Get Tested with Go-Go," a Go-Go concert where youth could win prizes if they took an HIV test

Measuring the Success of the Campaign

Metro TeenAIDS identified five indicators of success for the 2008 REALtalkDC campaign.

- More youth get tested for HIV during the ad campaign periods, times when campaign signs and posters were displayed throughout the Washington Area Metro Transit Authority system.
- Youth who get tested for HIV report seeing REALtalkDC campaign materials around the city.
- DC youth who get tested for HIV link their decision to get tested to REALtalkDC.
- Previously unidentified HIV+ youth are identified and connected to prevention services and care.
- People text REALtalkDC for HIV testing and sexual health information.

About Participants of Study

To determine the successes of the campaign, Metro TeenAIDS designed a study that used two evaluation approaches.

First, during the ad campaign that ran from October 24, 2008 to November 27, 2008, Metro TeenAIDS and partners asked youth who took HIV tests at our organizations to fill out spot interview cards that inquired about whether youth had seen campaign materials, how often they saw campaign materials, where they saw materials, and if the campaign materials motivated their decision to get tested.

Second, Metro TeenAIDS and partners tracked how many HIV tests they performed each week beginning two weeks before the beginning of the fall ad campaign and ending two weeks after. Metro TeenAIDS and partners also tracked how many youth tested positive for HIV.

While the fall ad campaign was running, Metro TeenAIDS increased HIV testing by 148% as compared to the weeks prior to the ad campaign.

Results

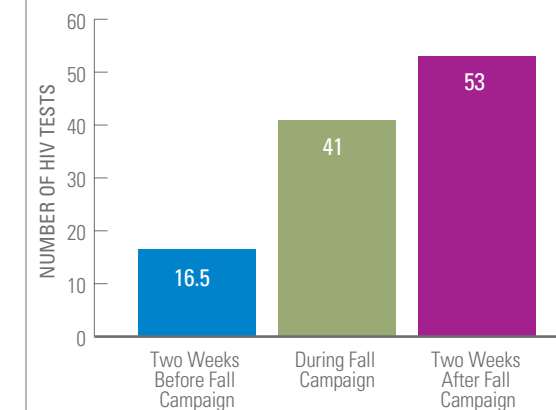
An analysis of spot interview cards and other campaign information show the following successes of REALtalkDC:

Finding #1: REALtalkDC campaign increases testing among young people.

While the fall ad campaign was running, Metro TeenAIDS increased HIV testing by 148% as compared to the weeks prior to the ad campaign. After the active campaign period, the number of youth seeking HIV tests remained high. This demonstrates that the campaign has a lasting effect, influencing individuals to get tested even after the materials have been removed.

Metro TeenAIDS partnership with Washington, DC's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to provide testing and entertainment services on Friday nights in recreation centers increased Metro TeenAIDS' capacity to test more youth. Allowing HIV/STI testing in public facilities where youth congregate like recreation centers, schools, and libraries connects many youth who otherwise might not take HIV tests to HIV testing services and prevention resources.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TESTS PER WEEK BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE REALTALKDC AD CAMPAIGN WAS RUNNING IN FALL 2008

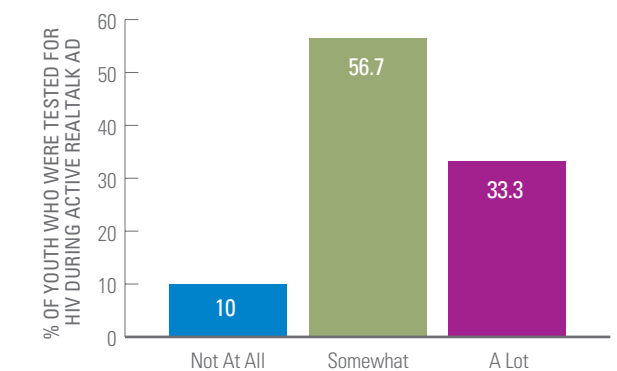


Finding #2: REALtalkDC campaign influences young people to get tested for HIV.

90% of African American youth tested for HIV during the fall ad campaign who reported seeing REALtalkDC campaign materials attribute their decision to take an HIV test to REALtalkDC. 33.3% of African American youth exposed to REALtalkDC materials and who took HIV tests during the fall ad campaign reported that the REALtalkDC campaign motivated their decision to get tested "a lot."

Engaging youth in their language and on their own terms works to motivate healthy decision-making among youth. Including youth in the process of developing marketing strategies to increase testing youth testing behavior is essential.

PERCENT OF YOUTH MOTIVATED TO GET TESTED FOR HIV BECAUSE OF REALTALKDC



Finding #3: Exposure to many kinds of campaign elements increases youths' motivation to get tested.

REALtalkDC incorporated a variety of campaign elements and materials. Materials included: bus exterior signs, signs in buses, posters in youth centers, palm cards, website, and event fliers. Of youth who were tested for HIV during the REALtalkDC fall ad campaign, those who reported having seen more kinds of materials were more likely to report being more motivated by the campaign to get tested. For example, 62.5% of youth who were tested and saw at least four kinds of campaign materials reported that the campaign influenced "a lot" their decision to get tested. Correspondingly, only 31.6% of youth who saw only one kind of material and were tested reported that the materials influenced their decisions "a lot."

Youth engaged about health in a variety of ways and settings led them to make decisions that benefit their health. Incorporating HIV/STI risk reduction information and prevention resources in many youth-accessed settings and programs regularizes discussion about accurate, HIV/STI information and leads to safer behavior.



2009 REALtalkDC print campaign poster scheduled to roll out in June.

More youth get tested for HIV during the ad campaign periods, times when campaign signs and posters were displayed throughout the Washington Area Metro Transit Authority system.



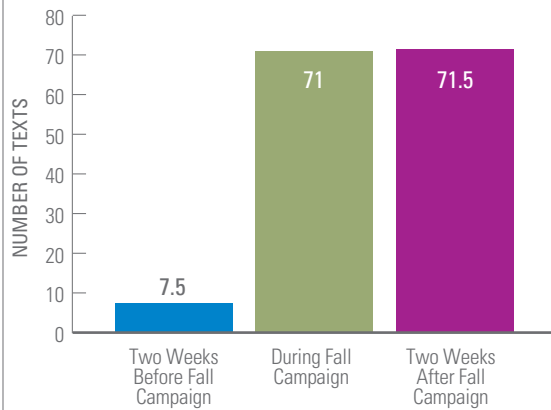
The high number of youth getting tested at these events suggests youth seek HIV tests when and where it is made convenient for them.

Finding #4: Youth use text messaging to receive HIV testing information.

From the launch of REALtalkDC through the end of December 2008, 1,493 individuals texted REALtalkDC. During the five-week fall ad campaign period alone, REALtalkDC received 371 text messages, or an average of 74.2 text messages per week.

Because over 90% of urban youth have cell phones and over two-fifths access the internet daily incorporating new media has become an important part of our work to connect DC youth to accessible HIV/STI testing and prevention resources and must be considered an important part of future HIV prevention among youth.²

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TEXTS SENT TO REALTALKDC PER WEEK



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Metro TeenAIDS and partners conducted more HIV testing more often at more community-centered venues during the REALtalkDC social marketing campaign. The high number of youth getting tested at these events suggests youth seek HIV tests when and where it is made convenient for them.

As the REALtalkDC social marketing campaign continues in 2009, Metro TeenAIDS plans to continue making HIV and STI testing services accessible to youth by:

- Organizing community testing events close to where youth live and spend their time
- Making REALtalkDC campaign materials visible in more locations across the city.
- Expanding the Youth Advisory Board into an outreach team of young people who work exclusively to promote REALtalkDC events and conduct outreach utilizing REALtalkDC print materials.
- Strengthening new media elements of the campaign, including:
 - A redeveloped www.realtalkdc.org website to provide up-to-date information about HIV/STI testing sites in the city and details about upcoming events, as well as provide an interactive chat feature to discuss HIV in DC.
 - Streamlining the process of finding free HIV/STI testing in DC through text messaging, and creating a text-based HIV in DC trivia game young people can play on their phones.

¹"District of Columbia HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Update 2008." DC Department of Health HIV/AIDS Administration: Washington: March, 2009.

²"Is the Digital Divide a Myth: National survey finds that the hip-hop generation embraces Internet." MEE Production, Inc. Philadelphia: Jan-Feb, 2009



METRO TEENAIDS

Metro TeenAIDS is the only local community health organization dedicated to supporting young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Through education, support, and advocacy, MTA prevents the spread of HIV; promotes responsible decision-making; and improves the quality of life for young people infected with, or affected by, HIV/AIDS. We will continue to seek out data and support research that can provide greater insight into how HIV/AIDS affects young people in our community.

To learn more, contact Metro TeenAIDS at **202.543.8246** or visit our website at www.metroteenaid.org.