

Approaches to **HIV/AIDS Education in Drug Treatment**

*a training manual
from the TCU/DATAR project*

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Preface

The Texas Christian University/Drug Abuse Treatment for AIDS-Risk Reduction (TCU/DATAR) Project is concerned with enhancing drug abuse treatment and client retention in order to help reduce client relapse rates and HIV/AIDS-risky behaviors. Research for the DATAR project was conducted by the Institute of Behavioral Research (IBR) at Texas Christian University, in collaboration with three community-based methadone treatment programs in Texas (located in Corpus Christi, Dallas, and Houston).

A variety of psychoeducational interventions were developed to help increase client retention and involvement in the therapeutic programs of the study sites. These interventions use curriculum-based modules to assist counselors in leading group sessions that are both enjoyable and meaningful to clients. The treatment modules address such topics as relapse prevention, assertiveness training for women, and social support and life skills enhancement. A contingency management protocol also was implemented and evaluated.

In addition, an HIV/AIDS prevention module was developed and shown to be effective in helping clients change risky behaviors, especially when offered during the first three months of treatment. The present manual, *Approaches to HIV/AIDS Education in Drug Treatment*, is an updated expansion of the original module, designed to reflect changes and new information in the field. Some handouts and activities used in the HIV/AIDS module incorporate node-link mapping, a visual representation system for helping clients improve personal problem-solving and decision making skills. Preliminary investigation indicates that node-link mapping has a positive impact on clients' focus and retention of information. A brief article describing node-link mapping techniques is included in the manual.

Throughout the last decade, the epidemic of HIV infection and AIDS among injection drug users has placed a unique burden on chemical dependency programs. Of the approximately 340,000 cases of AIDS reported in the U.S. in 1993, an estimated 33% were related in some way to injection drug use (Centers for Disease Control, 1994). Substance abuse treatment staff increasingly are required to provide HIV education and testing along with addiction counseling and case management. This manual was developed as a resource tool for counselors and other staff who work with drug using populations. Its goal is to present workable approaches for educating clients about HIV/AIDS and helping them develop the skills needed for effective, consistent reduction of HIV-risky behaviors.

Introduction

Approaches to HIV/AIDS Education in Drug Treatment is a training manual for counselors and treatment staff to use with clients in addressing HIV prevention as part of chemical dependency treatment. The manual presents a core curriculum for psychoeducational groups covering the basics of HIV transmission and prevention, including safer sex and injection practices, HIV testing, and personal risk-reduction. The manual also provides ideas for additional education sessions on HIV/AIDS that may be used to facilitate continued discussions about personal risk reduction as part of treatment. A list of educational resources and a series of short articles on HIV-related issues are included to help counselors prepare for groups.

It is hoped that the *Approaches to HIV/AIDS Education in Drug Treatment* manual will help treatment providers become more effective in the vital job of educating clients and encouraging them to adopt HIV risk-reduction behaviors. For those new to providing HIV/AIDS education in treatment settings, the manual should help increase confidence in addressing the topic. For those who have been doing it awhile, the manual offers some new “tricks” to help alleviate the boredom and burnout that may result from the frequent repetition of the same information.

The **Core Curriculum** is an AIDS 101 educational intervention consisting of four weekly 90-minute sessions designed to be presented sequentially. It is best suited to small groups (6–8 participants), so that there is ample time for discussion. The material may be used with co-ed groups drawn from a program’s general clientele; however, it is also suitable for gender-specific groups for women or men. It is also appropriate for groups made up of sex partners of injection drug users. The curriculum is written in an easy-to-follow format and provides group leaders with instructions, scripted lessons, and discussion questions for each session. The following topics are addressed:

- Session 1** Introductions and group building
What is HIV infection? What is AIDS?
Transmission issues
Exploring risk

- Session 2** Risk-reduction for HIV
Safer injection tips/bleach demonstration
Safer sex tips/condom demonstration
- Session 3** Personal rights and health protection
Assertiveness skills for HIV risk reduction
Risk situations role play
- Session 4** The Immune System
Testing for HIV: What does the test tell you?
Testing choices (confidential vs. anonymous)
Action plan for risk reduction

The curriculum uses an interactive approach with activities, role plays, case studies, and group exercises that encourage participation and information sharing. Specially designed visual aids to education, called node-link maps, are used in some sessions as handouts or exercises. (A brief article describing node-link mapping appears in the Resources Section). A pre-and posttest instrument to measure changes in HIV/AIDS knowledge is provided at the end of the curriculum. In addition, each session features a short evaluation designed to provide feedback to the group leader.

The section called **Additional Ideas** provides examples of other types of group activities and HIV/AIDS education sessions for clients. Group leaders may use these mini-lessons to augment the core curriculum, as substitutes for core sessions already addressed, or as periodic follow-up sessions to promote continued awareness of HIV-issues and reinforce clients' commitment to personal risk-reduction.

The **Resources** section features a guide to providers of HIV/AIDS educational materials, including videos, pamphlets, safer sex demonstration materials, and additional HIV/AIDS curricula. A series of brief articles is included on topics such as leading role plays, dealing with clients who are HIV positive, CDC guidelines for disinfecting with bleach, encouraging HIV testing, and dealing with sexual pressure. These articles provide informative background reading and may help prepare staff to answer clients' questions during the groups. Many of the articles are suitable for use as handouts for clients who request more information.

Chemical dependency professionals play a key role in the fight against HIV disease. The challenge of helping people change their HIV-risky behaviors will remain an integral part of drug treatment in the years ahead. We hope this manual is a useful tool for helping treatment staff meet this challenge.