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Theme: **Supporting Latino Farmworkers Needs in Regards to Effective HIV Prevention Strategies**

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What is Farmworker Justice and Border Health Foundation?

Farmworker Justice was founded in 1981 and seeks to assist migrant and seasonal farmworkers by providing litigation, administrative and legislative advocacy, training and technical assistance, coalition-building, public education and support for union organizing.

Border Health Foundation (BHF) was founded in 1984 and seeks to pursue improved healthcare and educate those who are in underserved high risk and low income communities through capacity building and public health programs.

Population Served by Farmworker Justice

Farmworker Justice works mostly with migrant and seasonal farmworkers in which their lifestyle behaviors put them at risk. Some of the general characteristics of the farmworker population are:

- Low education level
- Twenty to thirty-five years of age
- From Mexico and other countries
- In the U.S. for six months to two years
- Do not speak English

Due to the lower levels of education, migrant workers do not understand the dynamics of opening a bank account or filing taxes. Therefore, they usually go to places in which checks can be cashed (i.e. Western Union, Fast Cash etc.) and often lose a lot of the money they have made. When money becomes an issue, and there is not enough to send home, some migrant workers may turn to sex workers or become sex workers themselves. Because many of these farmworkers do not understand English, any pamphlets about HIV risk or STDs written in English will not apply to them. Due to the lack of accessibility condoms and negotiation skills are not regularly used.

The housing for the migrant population exposes the workers to pesticides and other harmful chemicals. Many may not have running water in which they can wash off the chemicals from their clothing and skin. This poses a lot of health issues for the migrant workers.

Population Served by Border Health Foundation

BHF works with all people of the Americas. One program is designed specifically for the Latino populations. Along with the general characteristics listed above, some other characteristics include:

- One in three are newcomers to the U.S. and agricultural work
- Speak Spanish or other indigenous dialects from Mexico
- Sixth grade education level and some have fewer than 3 years of school
- Over half of the farmworkers do not have status

One of the barriers that affect services for the migrant population is that there is a perception that service providers will *blow the whistle* on migrant workers and this inhibits them from acquiring services. Due to this barrier, many face infant mortality, low life expectancy, dental disease, tuberculosis and a higher incidence of work related injuries. Other factors that categorize them as high risk include; men having sex with men (MSM), men having unprotected sex with workers, substance use and needle sharing through the use of therapeutic injections such as vitamin B or other intravenous medication.

What Is a DEBI Program?

The acronym DEBI stands for, The Diffusion of Effective Behavioral Interventions. The DEBI project was devised to assist in the delivery of interventions to community-based organizations (CBOs) and state and local health departments. DEBIs are science-based interventions that bring awareness to and reduce the spread of HIV and STDs. The goal of the intervention is to promote healthy behaviors.

Farmworker Justice and Mpowerment DEBI

The Mpowerment project is designed for MSM youth between the ages of 18-29. The project provides both formal and informal outreach, discussion groups, social opportunities and social marketing. Farmworker Justice employees go to places in which young gay men congregate and talk to them about condom use. Discussion groups consist of 10-15 members and are 2-3 hours long. During the discussion groups, members discuss safe sex issues, how it is affecting their community and how to implement safer sex practices. The social opportunities that arise from Mpowerment are annual events such as barbeques. These annual events provide an environment in which *subtle* messages of safer sex and condom use can be distributed.

BHF and Safety Counts DEBI

The Safety Counts DEBI is an HIV prevention intervention designed for out of treatment injection and non-injection drug users. The main focus is to decrease drug use and sexual behaviors. The emphasis of Safety Counts focuses on outreach and recruitment. In Western Arizona, BHF piloted the Safety Counts intervention. The result was that many of the Latino participants have little formal education and are not literate in English. They also have a low knowledge of HIV and the risks associated with the disease. Therefore, the importance of outreach is critical. It is important to be familiar with the drug lingo and building trust within these communities.

For each of the DEBIs noted above, it is important to adapt the intervention to the Latino community. Adaptations that help the intervention include, translating the curriculum to Spanish and providing a greater emphasis on HIV 101.

Words of Wisdom for new CBOs

Miguel: “Go for it. Whatever you are doing with HIV, there is limited knowledge access and whatever you are providing is better than none.”

Ricky: “Before you consider yourselves to be the experts, really look at ourselves and the communities. Know the populations before you go in.”

Sarah: “There are always ways to be creative and a lot of free resources that you do not have to be funded for to get access.”

Jennifer: “Patience. It takes time so don’t get discouraged.”

For more information about Farmworker Justice, please visit:

<http://www.fwjustice.org/>

For more information about The Border Health Foundation, please visit:

<http://www.borderhealthfoundation.org/>

- Crystal Keefer