New Way to Prevent HIV and Substance Misuse Among Minority Youth?

A federal grant for a Latino adolescent center in the South Bronx will help evaluate a new peer-based approach.

July 17, 2020 By Trent Straube

A new program designed to reduce the risk of HIV acquisition and substance misuse among minority adolescents and young adults received a $1 million federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Specifically, under the five-year grant, New York University's Center for Latino Adolescent and Family Health (CLAFH) at the NYU Silver School of Social Work will implement and test a peer-based program called Educate, Test, and Navigate (ETN) in the South Bronx, according to an NYU press release.

The goal is not only to reduce substance misuse and other behavior that puts youth at risk for HIV but also to increase screenings for HIV and substance misuse and get more youth living with HIV retained in care and on treatment.

The South Bronx is considered one of the 48 counties in the nation with the highest rates of HIV. According to the press release, the rate of new HIV cases in the South Bronx is 29% higher than the rest of the Bronx. What's more, most HIV cases among youth in the Bronx in 2015 were located in the South Bronx.

The grant is part of the federal "Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America" initiative, which President Trump launched in 2019. The initiative aims to lower HIV rates nationwide by 75% in five years and by 90% in 10 years. One avenue for achieving that benchmark is to funnel federal resources into the 48 counties (plus Washington, DC, and San Juan, Puerto Rico) that account for more than half the new HIV cases in the country. For more details, read "Plans to End the HIV Epidemic At Home and Abroad."

The Educate, Test, and Navigate program in the South Bronx was developed by NYU's Center for Latino Adolescent and Family Health under the direction of Vincent Guilamo-Ramos, PhD, a

professor and nurse practitioner who focuses on the reproductive and sexual health of youth. The program kicks off in the fall.

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