



# Prevention and Education of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in the Young Adult Population of the North Shore of Staten Island



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## Introduction

Staten Island is the fifth borough that makes up New York City. It has the least amount of people out of all the other boroughs. However, looking at Staten Island as a whole, data reveals the North Shore population of Staten Island has the highest rate of newly diagnosed Human Immunodeficiency Virus, otherwise known as HIV among the young adults.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this presentation is to question if early education will prevent HIV in young adults on the North Shore of Staten Island. This will be achieved by a proposal of an educational and interactive workshop in high schools.

## Community Assessment and Analysis

- Staten Island is the only borough where Whites make up the majority of the population.<sup>2</sup>
  - Whites: 61%
  - Hispanics/Latinos: 19%
  - Blacks/African Americans: 10%
  - Asians: 10%
- The South Shore is predominantly White whereas the North Shore is racially diverse due to the exponential increase in the Asian and Hispanic population since 2000.<sup>2</sup>
- The North Shore of Staten Island is predominantly lower class; however, it is currently being gentrified through projects such as the St. George Waterfront Redevelopment Project, Lighthouse Point Project, and the Stapleton Waterfront Project.<sup>2</sup> Though it may be good for the community because it is expected to create permanent jobs and increase tourism, it could also create economic stress to those of the lower class by doubling to their current rent.<sup>2</sup>
- As for how the North Shore residents feel about their own health, majority report their health as "excellent". However, people who live in the North Shore are more likely to have an average life expectancy of 2.2 years shorter than the average New Yorker.<sup>3</sup>
- With data showing obesity rate at 24%, diabetes at 9% and hypertension at 26%, the biggest concern is how the 4th leading cause of premature death among the North Shore area is HIV.
- In fact, North Shore has the highest rate of new diagnosis of HIV. Although the community has many centers where people can go to be tested and learn about HIV, there aren't many residents that know that they are there which passively contributes to the rise in HIV infections.

## Problem in the Community

- As young adults transition into adulthood, they face many challenges whether it be socially or mentally. From taking on new responsibilities like scheduling their own doctors' appointments and getting yearly checkups to making competent decisions such as deciding whether to seek help or know when to say no during difficult situations, it is important to note that during this age they are more vulnerable than ever.
- From this, they become more vulnerable to infectious diseases such as HIV. With "almost half of youth ages 18-24 living with the disease in the US do not know they are infected"<sup>4</sup>, this shows that even with ongoing prevention efforts it remains an issue for the young adult population as they lack the responsibility to take initiative on their health.
- In Staten Island<sup>1</sup>, the problem is the fact that HIV still exists within this community when the issue could be eradicated completely.
- Statistics were shown that from 2014-2018, people ages 20-29 had the highest number of new HIV diagnoses in Staten Island<sup>1</sup>. However, even though there is a trend that shows a decrease in the number of newly diagnosed HIV young adults, the numbers still remained higher in comparison to any other age groups.
- As for the overall number and rate of new HIV diagnoses in both NYC and Staten Island, the difference in the rate of decrease was reported to be lower in Staten Island than in NYC.<sup>1</sup>
- The presence of HIV also impacted North Shore in a way that even when the community were timely linked to care in 2017, it shows there was a small portion of people who were timely linked to care in Port Richmond and Stapleton-St George in comparison to the other parts of the island such as the South Shore and NYC as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

## Proposed Solution

Our solution to decrease the number of young adults contracting HIV starts this a more comprehensive approach to education and awareness. With young adults, it is important to consider that they can be more spontaneous with their actions. Many youth leave high school with a lack of sexual education which leads to not taking preventative actions when having sex. Implementing an interactive workshop into the high school curriculum would provide the students with a better understanding of the risks that come with unprotected sex and the preventative measures they could take to prevent from contracting HIV. Emphasizing the need for abstaining from sex for as long as possible, educating about the need to use contraception, and educating about the steps taken after a person is diagnosed with HIV would be the goals of this program. The workshops would include guest speakers who are living with HIV to speak to the youth about how HIV affects their lives and what they could have done to prevent from contracting it, digital tools such as social media and stimulating educational videos, and group activities to help facilitate discussion. In all, educating the high school population about the risks of HIV is a key factor of preventing the spread of the virus as they grow into young adults.

## References

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