

# *d-up: DEFEND YOURSELF!*

## A Community-Level Intervention for Black MSM FACT SHEET

### Program Overview

*d-up: Defend Yourself!* is a community-level intervention for Black men who have sex with men (MSM). *d-up!* is a cultural adaptation of the Popular Opinion Leader (POL) intervention and is designed to change social norms and perceptions of Black MSM regarding condom use. *d-up!* finds and enlists opinion leaders whose advice is respected and trusted by their peers. These opinion leaders are trained to change risky sexual norms in their own social networks. Opinion leaders participate in a four-session training and endorse condom use in conversations with their friends and acquaintances.

### Target Population

*d-up!* specifically targets Black MSM who are in social networks with other Black MSM.

### Research Results

*d-up!* achieved the following results among targeted social networks of Black MSM in three North Carolina cities:

- Rates of unprotected insertive anal sex decreased 35.2%.
- Rates of unprotected receptive anal sex decreased 44.1%.
- The number of Black MSM reporting always using condoms for insertive anal sex increased 23.0%.
- The number of Black MSM reporting always using condoms for receptive anal sex increased 30.3%.
- The average number of partners for unprotected receptive anal sex decreased by 40.5%.

### Program Materials

- Implementation manual
- Facilitator's guide for training opinion leaders
- *d-up!* CD-ROM with copies of slides, handouts, and additional intervention tools

### Core Elements

1. Direct *d-up!* to an **identified at-risk target population** in well-defined community venues where the population's size can be assessed.
2. Use **key informants and systematic observation** to identify the target population's

social networks and to identify the most respected, credible, trustworthy, listened to, empathetic to friends, and self-confident persons in each network.

3. Over the life of the program, **recruit and train** as opinion leaders 15% of the persons from each friendship group in the social network that is found in the intervention venue.
4. Raise opinion leaders' awareness of how negative **social and cultural factors** impact Black MSM's sexual risk behavior in order to promote a norm of positive self-worth in their social networks and to address these biases in their conversations, as needed.
5. Teach opinion leaders **skills** for putting risk reduction endorsement messages into everyday conversations with friends and acquaintances.
6. Teach opinion leaders the elements of **effective behavior change messages** that target attitudes, norms, intentions, and self-efficacy related to risk. Train opinion leaders to personally endorse the benefits of safer sex in their conversations and to offer practical steps to achieve change.
7. Hold weekly sessions for small groups of opinion leaders to help them improve their skills and gain confidence in giving effective HIV prevention messages to others. **Instruct, model, role-play, and provide feedback** during these sessions. Make sure that all opinion leaders have a chance to practice and shape their communication skills and get comfortable putting messages into conversations.
8. Have opinion leaders set **goals** to hold risk reduction conversations with at-risk friends and acquaintances in their own social network between weekly sessions.
9. **Review, discuss, and reinforce** the outcomes of the opinion leaders' conversations at later training sessions.
10. Use logos, symbols, or other items as **"conversation starters"** between opinion leaders and others.

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