Taking Responsibility by Informing Men

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Abstract

Operation TRIM was designed as a way for local public health workers to educate, empower, and collaborate with barber shops and beauty salons within the North Central Health District counties to provide free STD prevention literature and prophylactics to their customers. The goal of Operation TRIM was to carry out a pilot implementation, assess the implementation, and develop an evaluation plan. Barbershops and beauty salons have proven to be culturally appropriate health education venues, and in many communities, these businesses are akin to your local sports broker, pastor, counselor, big brother, politician, obnoxious uncle, teacher, and arbitrator. It is not uncommon for barbershop patrons to spend hours waiting for goods or services and just being present for entertainment value. This time presents a golden opportunity at the feet of public health workers to impact change in community health through Operation TRIM.

This pilot study focused on efforts in Putnam County, Georgia. In collaboration with the Georgia Department of Public Health, North Central Health District Communicable Disease Unit. Collaborative opportunities were sought, two-way education fostered, and increased utilization of local health department STD services was noted in the short-term.

Methods

Barbershops and hair salons were identified in Putnam County by NCHD Communicable Disease Coordinator and the student researcher.

Barbershops were contacted through the mail and over the telephone to gauge interest. For those contacted the student researcher attempted to provide information to Barbershop owners, on how STDs impact the community and requested an opportunity have them collaborate with TRIM.

NCHD Communicable Disease Coordinator and the student researcher took to the streets of Putnam County to engage the community in an effort to establish relationships with Putnam County Barbershops.

Implementation began to take form after direct interaction was made at Jones Master Cuts. The barbershop owner Grady Jones was mentioned by the Putnam County Health Department to be a cornerstone in the African American Community of Putnam County.

The student researcher attempted to have a formal agreement with Jones Master Cuts and the North Central Health District. The student researcher focused on evaluation design by providing a pre and post test to barbershop owner to ask patrons to complete.

The student researcher prepared twenty five complete contraceptive kits for Jones Master Cuts. Each contraceptive kit included ten quality condoms, two female condoms, two forms of literature, instructions on how to properly use a contraceptive device (both male and female), two rubber dams and STD Awareness paraphernalia.

The student researcher followed up with the shop owner on a weekly basis to obtain feedback from the barbershop and patrons.

Developed provisions for the shop owner to communicate directly with Putnam County Health Department essential personnel beyond completion of the student researchers project.

Call to encourage other local businesses to become a part of TRIM.

Results

Out of the 15 local listed barbershops in Putnam County zero were initially open to TRIM.

“Women Barbershop,” explained that due to the age of the patrons that frequented their establishment that they had absolutely no interest.

Jones Master Cuts agreed to partner with the NCHD and the student researcher to launch TRIM in Putnam County.

The people of Putnam County begin to come in to the Putnam County Health Department for testing and diagnosis after information was beginning to spread throughout the community.

The student researcher and Jones Master Cuts were in constant contact on supply levels and the likes and dislikes of patrons. Twenty-five new kits were delivered to weekly Jones Master Cuts.

Recommendations

The process of preventing STDs must be a collaborative one. No one agency, organization, or sector can effectively address STD prevention without community engagement, which includes non-traditional partners.

Public health, should reconsidere and broaden their potential stakeholders and partners for prevention efforts. Further engage community based businesses for participation.

Local health departments need to investigate, understand, and utilize technology as a means to communicate health prevention information.

Today’s youth use social media and phone applications (apps) as a primary mechanism to communicate and transfer information.

To address the incidence and prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in Putnam County, Georgia, public health may need to refocus their prevention effort strategy, modify how services are delivered, and accept new responsibilities.

The student researcher recommends initial implementation of a project such as Operation TRIM should be made by people from outside the County, for it decreased the perception of bias among local citizens due to their longstanding relationship with the current Communicable Disease Unit staff.

References

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources County Comparison Tool. [http://www.cores.state.ga.us/]

Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of Health Indicators for Planning (OZIP), Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS). Retrieved from [http://oasis.state.ga.us/]

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