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THE POWERR PROJECT

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The POWERR Project (Prevention Outreach with Women Empowered to Reduce Risks) is a seven-session HIV prevention intervention targeting young African American and Latina women aged 16-19. POWERR was developed in response to increases in HIV/AIDS incidence among young African American women in Alameda County and has been implemented within 5 charter high schools in Oakland, CA.

POWERR uses creative activities to explore the social and political context of girls' lives, particularly gender roles, communication, and vision for the future, and how these play out in sexual and intimate relationships. POWERR's goals are to: 1) increase personal sense of empowerment within the context of gender roles and intimate relationships; 2) increase sexual health knowledge; 3) reduce sexual risk taking; and 4) increase understanding of positive social networks.

Three forms of data are collected to assess whether and how the POWERR Project is meeting its goals and objectives: 1) quantitative outcome data, 2) qualitative data, and 3) process data. In Year I, twenty-nine young women participated in POWERR and completed Pre- and Post- Test Surveys. Fifteen young women (52%) reported ever having had sex with a man; with one-third reporting vaginal sex in the past month. Twice as many girls reported using a condom always for vaginal sex on the Post- as on the Pre-Test, a preliminary indication of the intervention's positive effects on sexual risk behavior. Qualitative and quantitative results support the need for sexual health interventions that address the social and cultural context of gender norms and reproductive technologies.