

Development of a Health Curriculum for the Work2Prevent Employment Intervention

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PURPOSE Work2Prevent (W2P; ATN 151) is a structural intervention developed to reduce risk for HIV among Black and Latinx young men who have sex with men (YMSM) and young trans women (YTW), by equipping them with the skills needed to secure stable employment. W2P is largely an adaptation of the i4 employment intervention. Given that i4 was geared toward HIV+ individuals returning to work, a portion of the intervention was not appropriate for the W2P sample. Accordingly, more appropriate health-related materials were identified and adapted or developed by the research team, in order to educate W2P participants on the impacts of work on health and health on work. Priority areas were selected through a combination of reviewing the relevant literature and the findings of W2P Phase 1. These materials constitute Day 3 of the W2P curriculum.

MENTAL HEALTH/SUBSTANCE USE YMSM and YTW of color are at heightened risk for mental health challenges due to experiences of minority stress (McConnell et al., 2018; Mereish et al., 2017). Participants in W2P Phase 1 indicated interpersonal challenges to maintaining employment (e.g., difficulty navigating discrimination) and feeling like a drug test was a barrier to entry for employment. Activities related to MH were adapted from i4 to give participants skills in stress management, resilience, and using substances responsibly.

SEXUAL HEALTH YMSM and YTW of color continue to be at increased risk for HIV acquisition, comprising a disproportionate segment of new diagnoses (CDC, 2016). Accordingly, activities were included in the curriculum which would increase sexual health knowledge and give participants a chance to practice problem-solving related to sexual health.

FINANCIAL WELLNESS Participants in W2P Phase 1 indicated limited experience with budgeting and differences between formal and cash economies. Interactive activities wherein participants could practice financial wellness skills and increase understanding of related concepts were developed to meet this need.

HARM REDUCTION Harm reduction (Leslie et al., 2008) was selected as a framework to support participants in their skill-building and problem-solving related to health. It was selected for its nonjudgmental approach, encouragement of self-reflection, and support for flexible thinking. Further, it emphasizes that each individual's approach to meeting their needs may differ, depending upon their given circumstances, needs, and perspective; and, lastly, it encourages individuals to consider small, medium, and larger changes which can be made in order to impact/change a situation.

DEVELOPMENT/REVISION The research team held 4 meetings with the W2P community advisory board (CAB) to present members with material adapted from i4 and/or devised by the research team. Revisions were made accordingly.

Mental Health/Substance Abuse The i4 curriculum had multiple modules related to MH and SA. After light adaptation for audience, these modules were presented to the CAB for review. After CAB feedback, the research team added opportunities to practice stress management skills in-session. Further, the team researched and included a detailed chart of drug testing timelines, in order to allow participants to make informed decisions about their potential use.

Sexual Health The sexual health modules from i4 were not intended for an HIV-negative audience. As such, the research team researched and developed a range of activities for this portion of the curriculum, including an STI knowledge card sort, an HIV risk thermometer tailored to MSM and TW, and informational pages on strategies for reducing HIV risk. In addition, the research team workshopped a list of common HIV myths with the CAB in order to identify myths more common in their communities which warranted clarification/debunking.

Financial Wellness Given that financial wellness was not addressed in i4, the research team identified several potential activities for learning about budgeting and money-management. The CAB then selected the activity which they found most helpful and engaging (i.e., completing a detailed budget). In addition, the research team collaborated with Ci3's Game Changer Chicago Design Lab to design a tabletop game wherein participants act as individuals in either the cash or formal economy. The CAB reviewed the game during development and again after assets were finalized.

Harm Reduction Three vignettes were developed by the research team to give participants an opportunity to practice applying harm reduction to fictional individuals navigating challenges related to substances, sexual health, and finances.

Activity	Learning Objective	Development
Wellness & Work	Understand how wellness and employment are related to one another and explore ways to stay healthy while working.	Adapted
Mental Health, Quality of Life, & Work	Understand how wellness and employment are related to one another and explore ways to stay healthy while working.	Adapted
Work & Stress	Identify and practice strategies to relieve work-related stress.	Adapted
Resilience & Work	Identify and practice strategies to relieve work-related stress.	Adapted
Substance Use & Work	Reflect on how to manage substance use while working and applying to jobs.	Adapted
Introduction to Harm Reduction	Understand the harm reduction framework and how it can be used when making decisions related to wellness and work.	Developed
Sexual Health & Work	Identify strategies to minimize health risks while maintaining a pleasurable sex life.	Developed
Financial Wellness	Develop a working budget to manage money.	Developed
Navigating Economies	Understand how cash flow differs between employment in the formal and cash economies.	Developed
Harm Reduction Exercises	Apply the harm reduction framework to a scenario involving mental health/substance use, sexual health, and financial wellness.	Developed
Resource Guides	As needed, access additional resources related to mental health/substance use, sexual health, and financial wellness.	Developed

CONCLUSION The health curriculum for Work2Prevent was intentionally developed in heavy consultation with the CAB and Ci3's Game Changer Chicago Design Lab in order to ensure that materials were appropriate for the audience and sufficiently engaging to maintain attention. Though the broader Work2Prevent curriculum prepares participants for the typically understood key components of applying for and maintaining a job, the health education portion of the curriculum is intended to help participants build additional skills that will help them maintain mental, physical, and financial health. Activities were continually recalibrated in order to ensure important gaps in participants' knowledge and/or comfort were addressed. The harm reduction framework was infused throughout the curriculum in order to promote flexible thinking and consideration of many options, as participants made changes toward better health. Lastly, the activities in the health curriculum emphasize that work toward maintaining health will better facilitate long-term employment and work toward maintaining long-term employment can facilitate increased health.

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