

# *Peer education training of young gay men in Sydney*



# *Fun and Esteem project*

For young gay and bisexual men 26  
years and under

Volunteer facilitated workshop  
program, Start Making Sense

Ten to twelve groups per year with up  
to fourteen participants



# ARE YOU IN THE PICTURE?

THE FUN & ESTEEM PROJECT  
For gay and bisexual men under 26 years old



# *Volunteer facilitator training*

- Selected from young men who have completed Start Making Sense course
- One day of training on each consecutive Saturday for five weeks (August/September 2003)
- Ten men aged 19-27 years

# *Changes since previous training*

- First since 2000
- Rise in HIV infections during 2002
- Ongoing epidemics of gonorrhoea, chlamydia
- Syphilis outbreak
- Increased awareness of Hepatitis A and B susceptibility (HIM study)
- Change to age of consent

# *Changes to training*

- Increased focus on HIV, STIs, gay men's health and sex cultures
- Increased utilisation of research
- Greater focus on personal values
- Sections on ethnicity/culture, mental health, drug use moved into program of ongoing training
- Decreased focus on age of consent issues

# *Training program*

## **Day 1: Project information + facilitation skills**

- History of ACON from ACON Executive Director, Stevie Clayton
- Q&A panel of current volunteer facilitators
- Personal goals
- Personal skills and knowledge assessment

# *Training program*

## **Day 2: HIV/STI info, HIV treatment, living with HIV**

- SSHC: Dr Nathan Ryder
- HIV treatment: ACON Treatments Officer, Tony Gardner
- Young gay man from Positive Speakers Bureau
- continuum of sexual health risk adapted to include sero-concordance/-discordance, viral load, risk reduction and presence of STIs

# *Training program*

## **Day 3: Gay men's sexual health + facilitation skills**

- Garrett Prestage (NCHECR): HIV and STI epidemiology, social and behavioural research on risk, sex cultures, relationships etc.
- Profile of project workers
- Practical facilitation exercises from Start Making Sense

# *Training program*

## **Day 4: State of the epidemic + facilitation skills**

- Fraser Drummond (NCHECR): current treatment and prevention challenges, epidemic projections
- Practical facilitations, active listening/use of questions
- Personal values: injecting drug use, bisexual men, PLWHA, intergenerational sex, SOPV users, Indigenous people, S/M and leather scene

# *Training program*

## **Day 5: Facilitation skills**

- Practical facilitations
- Conflict resolution
- Re-assessment of personal goals, personal skills and knowledge assessments from Day 1
- Presentation of certificates by ACON Board Member David Buchannan

# *Reading material*



- Staged reading material on:
- Peer education, post-AIDS/post-crisis theory
- HIV transmission, testing, risk
- Hepatitis A, B, C and common STIs
- HIV treatment
- Living with HIV

# *Reading material*

- Negotiated safety and why negotiated safety agreements fail
- Risk reduction strategies
- PEP
- Vaccines
- Gay men's health
- HIV status disclosure
- National and international patterns of the HIV epidemic
- Drugs

# *Evaluation*



- Training evaluated by:
  - daily evaluation questionnaire
  - larger evaluation at conclusion of training
  - notes taken by project workers through group reflection at end of each day


# *Results*

- Presentations from ACON ED + board member, researchers and PLWHA
- Participants overestimated their HIV/STI knowledge before training
- Training had unexpected benefits in building confidence, broadening of social networks, personal development as gay men
- Move to new technology
- Need to update/rewrite SMS itself
- More food


# *What we learned*




- Young gay men can:
  - appreciate a broader context
  - expand their knowledge beyond the basics
  - engage with history
  - understand research
  - locate themselves and their potential within the behavioural and social aspects of the HIV epidemic



*“Start Making Sense helped me come out and accept that I was gay - this training has helped me see my potential as a gay man in Sydney. I was happy and proud to be gay before this, but now I feel like I have a greater sense of purpose as a gay man.”*



*“I can clearly see that what I do with my life can make a difference to the HIV epidemic. The way that the community thinks and acts is something that I can change by the way I think and act. I never really understood that I could be this powerful.”*



*“Doing this training has been awesome. It makes me want to play a role in the future of the gay community, and has shown me how I can do that. The future can turn out to be whatever way we choose it to be.”*

