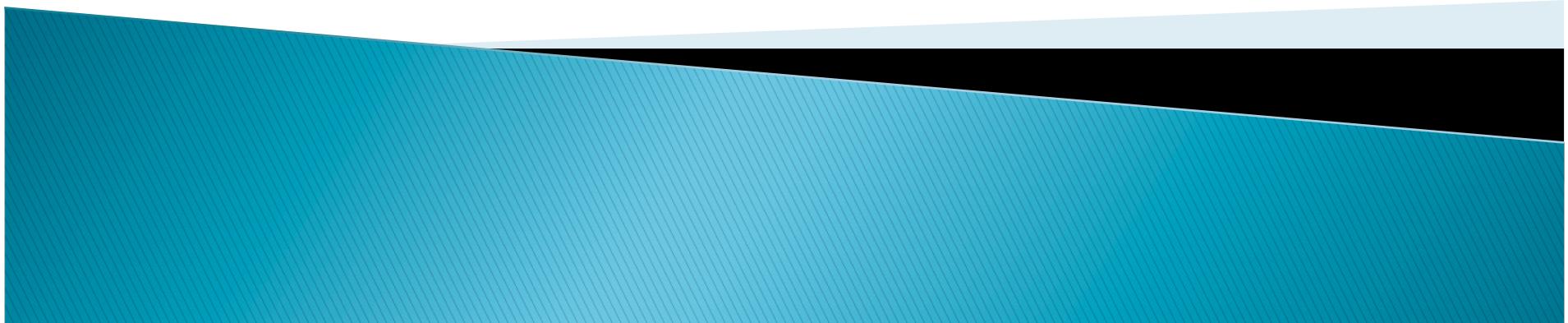


VOICES: A Qualitative Study with MSMs in South Florida

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Background

A Portrait of 2011

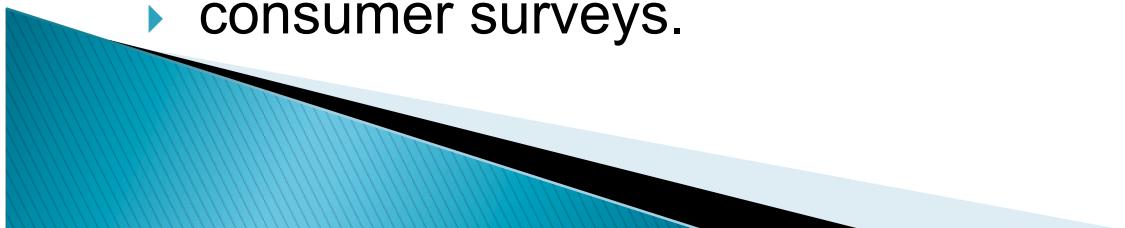
- ▶ In Broward County, Florida, 21,100 persons lived with HIV disease
- ▶ 3,334 (15.8%) were unaware,
- ▶ the largest number resided in Ft. Lauderdale.
- ▶ 1000 new cases of HIV were reported, showed an increase of 25% from 2010.
- ▶ new cases affected persons between the ages of 40 and 49.
- ▶ MSMs make up approximately 70% of all infections.



Methods

A multifaceted approach assessed the epidemic among gay, bisexual, and other MSMs:

- ▶ community advisory workgroup
- ▶ review of the literature
- ▶ 25 key informant interviews
- ▶ 17 focus groups with men of known and unknown HIV sero-status
- ▶ 4 focus groups with transgender women
- ▶ consumer surveys.



Research Question

What are the socio-sexual-cultural circumstances that lead to increased risk and transmission of HIV among gay, bisexual men and transgender women?



Results

- ▶ Young and older MSMs report and experience social isolation, disaffiliation and limited choices for socialization and healthy relationships.
- ▶ Most feel HIV infection is inevitable or 'just a matter of time.'
- ▶ For some gay men who have been living with HIV for more than 15 years, HIV messages are not relevant to their experiences.
- ▶ The availability and accessibility of venues and multi-day circuit parties that promote sexual play and risk-taking behaviors also contribute to the spread of HIV among gay and bisexual men, and transgender women.
- ▶ Online 'hookups' that advertise 'bareback sex play' create the perception that it is no longer a socio-sexual cultural norm to use protective barriers during sexual intercourse.
- ▶ Having very limited venues for positive self-expression and health promotion, many gay and bisexual MSMs living with HIV experience shame, low self-esteem and isolation .

Conclusions

- ▶ The Broward County HIV epidemic is influenced by socio-sexual-cultural economic dynamics.
- ▶ Anonymous sex, alcohol, and crystal meth ease hardships associated with a lack of social and communications skills.
- ▶ Loneliness, isolation, and exhaustive vigilance create “the perfect storm” of HIV infection.

