

## Project BEAT—Collaborating to Address HIV Education and Attitudes in Teens

### ***Broward County, Florida***

#### Problem Overview

In 2004, an estimated 4,883 young people aged 13–24 in the 33 states reporting to the CDC were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Through 2003, CDC estimates that 5,492 children under the age of 13 in the United States died as a result of AIDS-related illnesses. Statistics from 2005 show that Broward County, Florida, leads the nation in new AIDS infections.

#### Program Description

Although Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) had a well-structured HIV/AIDS curriculum for grades 2–12, data revealed a need for enhanced secondary school education. To improve existing programming and maximize CDC funds for preventing HIV/AIDS infections, sexually transmitted disease transmissions, and unplanned pregnancies, BCPS partnered with the Broward County chapter of the American Red Cross to develop and implement an HIV/AIDS education program for secondary students—Project BEAT (Bridging Education and Attitudes in Teens).

Project BEAT blends existing BCPS HIV/AIDS curricula with Red Cross standards and objectives, including peer and parental education components. Specifically, the program provides instructors to teach a supplemental HIV curriculum and trains teachers to facilitate peer education clubs in districts at higher risk for HIV transmission.

#### Program Impact

Highlights of the program's successes include the following:

- By the end of the third year, Project BEAT reached nearly 54,000 middle and high school youth and approximately 2,200 parents and community members.
- During the 2006–2007 academic year, assessments given to randomly selected secondary school students indicated a 97.3% post-test score in knowledge of HIV/AIDS and related decision making skills, an increase of 28% overall.
- By the close of the 2006–2007 academic year, more than 150 BCPS high school students were certified as Red Cross HIV/AIDS instructors to provide their peers with science-based information under the auspices of Red Cross staff.

Effective risk reduction strategies offer hope for decreasing the spread of HIV/AIDS. In times of shrinking budgets, partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential for implementing health promotion and disease prevention activities to improve the health of our nation's youth. Addressing a common goal through combined efforts can yield dynamic partnerships, pooled resources, shared expertise, and new insights into better ways to address the health challenges facing our youth.

*Note: Success stories, including background data and outcomes, reflect information as reported by participating programs. Also, in this context, impact refers to short-term or intermediate outcomes.*

