

Proactive HIV testing among youth in south Florida

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HIV infection continues to be a challenge to public health after over three decades. A major driving source of this epidemic is HIV infection among youth. Youth currently account for over a fifth of new HIV infection in the United States, and experience poorer health outcomes compared to other age groups. In combating HIV infection among youth, HIV testing has been found to be a major tool for identifying those at risk or infected, counselling, and linking to care. However, youth have the lowest rate of HIV testing. This study explores the experiences of youth aged 18–24, who proactively tested for HIV infection in South Florida, using a qualitative descriptive method. Data was collected with a demographic questionnaire and through individual in-depth interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded and data collected only once from each

participant. Twenty-five participants (N=25) were recruited, enrolled and interviewed. The youth in this study identified peer relationships, family support, privacy, and proximity of testing centers as facilitators to proactive HIV testing. Problems with confidentiality, stigma, cost, and not being offered testing by a healthcare professional were identified as barriers to proactive HIV testing. The findings from this study will enable nurses create interventions both in clinical and community settings that will facilitate proactive HIV testing among youth. Furthermore, findings from this study will assist nurses in creating testing sites that encourage proactive HIV testing, and that are tailored to the needs of youth.

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