

SAFETY COUNTS

A Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention to Reduce HIV/HCV Risks Among Drug Users

FACT SHEET:

Program Overview

Safety Counts is an HIV prevention intervention for out-of-treatment active injection and non-injection drug users aimed at reducing both high-risk drug use and sexual behaviors. It is a behaviorally focused, seven-session intervention, which includes both structured and unstructured psycho-educational activities in group and individual settings.

This intervention works well with CDC's Advancing HIV Prevention initiative as it strongly encourages HIV testing as a precursor to program enrollment, clients can be recruited from testing programs, and sessions include a discussion of the importance of testing to the client. The intervention addresses the needs of both HIV-negative and HIV-positive clients.

Core Elements

Original program developers identify the five core elements as:

- Group Session One and Group Session Two (identify client's HIV risks and current stage of change, hear risk-reduction success stories, set personal goal, identify first step to reduce HIV risk, and make referrals to C&T and medical/social services)
- One (or more) Individual Counseling Session (discuss/refine risk-reduction goal, assess client's needs, and provide needed referrals to C&T and medical/social services)
- Two (or more) Social Events (share meal and socialize, participate in a planned HIV-related risk-reduction activity, and receive reinforcement for personal risk reduction)
- Two (or more) Follow-up Contacts (review client's progress in achieving risk-reduction goal, discuss barriers encountered, identify concrete next step and discuss possible barriers/solution, and make referrals to C&T and medical/social services)
- HIV/HCV Counseling and Testing (offer the client this service either through referrals or at the implementing agency)

Target Population

Safety Counts targets individuals who are currently using drugs, including injectors and non-injectors, and are not in drug treatment programs.

Program Materials

- Program manual
- Handouts / worksheet master copies
- Program forms to track enrollment, client participation, etc.
- Evaluation tools / forms
- Sample video

Research Results

- Clients who were enrolled in *Safety Counts* were about 1.5 times more likely to reduce their drug- and sex-related risks compared with clients in the standard intervention.
- Clients who were enrolled in *Safety Counts* were more than 2.5 times more likely to self-report an increase in condom use compared with clients in the standard intervention.
- Clients who were enrolled in *Safety Counts* were significantly more likely to self-report a reduction in the number of times they inject and more likely to test negative for opiates through urinalysis.

For More Information on Safety Counts

To obtain additional information about the technical assistance system and/or to get your name on a list for a future training, **please visit our website www.effectiveinterventions.org**. If you do not have access to the web, you may also call (800) 462-9521, or email interventions@aed.org

Rhodes, F., Wood, M.S. (1999). A cognitive-behavioral intervention to reduce HIV risks among active drug users. Paper presented at the 127th Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Chicago, IL.

Rhodes, F., Humfleet, G.L. (1993). Using goal-oriented counseling and peer support to reduce HIV/AIDS risk among drug users not in treatment. *Drugs & Society* (3/4):185-204.

Agency Readiness Tool

The following is a brief self-assessment intended to assist agencies (e.g., community-based organizations) to determine if they currently possess the capacity, or can build the capacity, to adopt and implement the *Safety Counts* intervention. Please read each item and then place a check mark (√) in only one response column.

Capacities and Resources Needed for <i>Safety Counts</i>	Yes, we have this capacity (1)	We do not presently have this capacity, but can build the capacity (2)	No, we do not have this capacity (3)
1. The ability to recruit clients who are injecting or non-injecting drug users not currently in treatment and maintain these clients in a 7-session program over 4 to 6 months			
2. Personnel skilled at facilitating structured HIV prevention programs for group and individual sessions (or personnel who can be trained in facilitation)			
3. Personnel skilled at street-level outreach for structured HIV prevention discussions with drug users (or personnel who can be trained in outreach)			
4. The ability to work with clients in a private/quiet area without disrupting other agency services			
5. Access to a private area where a group of 10 or more can gather for structured social events			
6. Access to photocopier, television/VCR or audiotape player, newsprint and markers, safe sex and needle hygiene kits			

If all of your responses were in column 1 (“Yes, we have this capacity”) or column 2 (“We do not presently have this capacity, but can build the capacity”), your agency is likely “ready” for *Safety Counts*.

For more information, or to sign up for a training, visit:

www.effectiveinterventions.org