

# FAMILIAS UNIDAS

## Best Evidence – Risk Reduction

### INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION

#### Target Population

- Hispanic or Latino delinquent youth and their primary caregivers

#### Goals of Intervention

- Reducing HIV sexual risk behaviors
- Increasing family functioning between parents and adolescents

#### Brief Description

*Familias Unidas* is a group-level, culturally-specific, family-based HIV preventive intervention that includes eight group sessions of 10 to 12 parents and four family visits. The sessions focus on positive parenting, family communication, parental monitoring, and adolescent HIV risk behaviors. All sessions are parent-centered with adolescents' participation limited to activities during the family visits. The intervention engages Hispanic immigrant parents in an empowerment process to first build a strong parent-support network and then use the network to increase knowledge of culturally relevant parenting, strengthen parenting skills, and apply these new skills in a series of activities designed to reduce risks frequently found in poor, urban environments. *Familias Unidas* aims to change HIV risk behaviors by improving family functioning.

#### Theoretical Basis

- Ecodevelopmental theory

#### Intervention Duration

- Eight 2-hour group sessions and four 1-hour family visits delivered over 3 months

#### Intervention Settings\*

- Home
- Public schools
- Clinics
- Research offices

#### Deliverer

- Hispanic facilitators

#### Delivery Methods

- Action plan
- Counseling
- Discussion
- Group activities
- Role play
- Skills building
- Support networks
- Tutoring

## INTERVENTION PACKAGE INFORMATION

**An intervention package is not available at this time.** Please contact **Guillermo Prado**, Department of Public Health Sciences, Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami, 1120 NW 14 St., Suite 1010, Miami, FL 33136.

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## EVALUATION STUDY AND RESULTS

The original evaluation was conducted in Miami-Dade County, Florida between August 2009 and June 2010.

### Key Intervention Effects

- Reduced inconsistent condom use during vaginal sex
- Reduced engaging in sex without a condom while under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Reduced number of sex partners

### Study Sample

The baseline study sample of 242 adolescents is characterized by the following:

- *100% Hispanic/Latino*
- *64% male, 36% female*
- *Mean age of 15 years*

### Recruitment Settings

Department of juvenile services and public school system

### Eligibility Criteria

Adolescents were eligible if they were of Hispanic origin, between 12 to 17 years old, would remain a resident of South Florida during the study period, and were a delinquent youth defined as having been arrested or having committed at least 1 “level III behavior problem” including assault or threat against a non-staff member, breaking and entering, burglary, fighting, hazing, possession or use of alcohol or controlled substances, possession of simulated weapons, trespassing, and vandalism.

### Assignment Method

Adolescents (N = 242) and their primary caregivers were randomly assigned to 1 or 2 groups: Familias Unidas intervention (n = 120) or community practice comparison (n = 122).

### Comparison Group

The community practice comparison consisted of standard care services available to youth and parents of delinquent youth in Miami-Dade County. These services included referrals to community-based agencies that addressed problem behaviors and provision of individual and family therapy.

### Relevant Outcomes Measured and Follow-up Time

- Sex behaviors (including sex initiation, condom use during vaginal or anal sex, number of days of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs and having unprotected sex†, and number of sex partners during the past 90 days) were measured at baseline and 6 months post-baseline, which translates to 3 months after the intervention.
- Biologic outcome (self-reported ever having contracted an STD) was measured at baseline and 6 months post-baseline, which translates to 3 months after the intervention.

### Participant Retention

- Familias Unidas intervention:
  - 94% retained at 6 months (3 months after intervention)
- Community practice comparison:
  - 97% retained at 6 months (3 months after intervention)

### Significant Findings

- Among sexually active adolescents, defined as those who reported having sex in the past 90 days at baseline or at follow up, intervention participants were significantly less likely to report inconsistent condom use during vaginal sex than comparison participants at 3 months post-intervention (RR = 0.61, 95% CI = 0.39, 0.87).
- Among sexually active adolescents, intervention participants reported significantly fewer sex partners than comparison participants at 3 months post-intervention (IRR = 0.35, 95% CI = 0.28, 0.44).
- Among sexually active adolescents, intervention participants reported fewer days in which they had unprotected sex† while under the influence of drugs or alcohol than comparison participants at 3 months post-intervention (IRR = 0.36, 95% CI = 0.22, 0.58).

### Considerations

- At 3 months post-intervention, there were significant intervention effects for overall family functioning, including significant improvement in parent-adolescent communication and positive parenting, but not parental monitoring.
- There were significant differences between those lost to follow-up and those retained with regards to lifetime sex ( $p = 0.015$ ) and having sex in the past 90 days ( $p = 0.033$ ). Those lost to follow up were less likely to have had sex.
- Intervention effects were noted for reducing inconsistent condom use during anal sex and reducing unprotected anal sex† at last sex, however the sample sizes were extremely small.

\*Information obtained from author

†Unprotected sex measured as sex without a condom

## REFERENCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

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Coatsworth, J. D., Pantin, H., & Szapocznik, J. (2002). [Familias Unidas: A family-centered ecodevelopmental intervention to reduce risk for problem behavior among Hispanic adolescents](#). *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 5, 113-132.

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