What HIV programs work for adolescent girls?

2014. 10 p.

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Periodical title:
JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes, 66, Suppl. 2, July 1, 2014: p S176–S185

Description:
Background: Adolescent girls face unique challenges in reducing their risk of acquiring HIV because of gender inequalities, but much of HIV programming and evaluation lacks a specific focus on female adolescents. Methods: This article, based on a review of 150 studies and evaluations from 2001 to June 2013, reviews evidence on programming for adolescents that is effective for girls or could be adapted to be effective for girls. Results: The evidence suggests specific interventions for adolescent girls across 3 critical areas: (1) an enabling environment, including keeping girls in school, promoting gender equity, strengthening protective legal norms, and reducing gender-based violence; (2) information and service needs, including provision of age-appropriate comprehensive sex education, increasing knowledge about and access to information and services, and expanding harm reduction programs for adolescent girls who inject drugs; and (3) social support, including promoting caring relationships with adults and providing support for adolescent female orphans and vulnerable children. Discussion: Numerous gaps remain in evidence-based programming for adolescent girls, including a lack of sex- and age-disaggregated data and the fact that many programs are not explicitly designed or evaluated with adolescents in mind. However, evidence reinforces bolstering critical areas such as education, services, and support for adolescent girls. Conclusions: This article contributes to the growing body of literature on HIV and adolescent girls and reviews the vulnerabilities of girls, articulates the challenges of programming, develops a framework for addressing the needs of girls, and reviews the evidence for successful programming for adolescent girls.

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