

## Regulating Emotion to Reduce HIV Risk in Delinquent Youth

PI: Marguerita Lightfoot PhD

### Project Description

This study will develop a computerized intervention to train youth to regulate their emotions. This strategy is based on our previous successful experiences developing computerized interventions. We will develop a computerized intervention to reduce HIV risk behaviors grounded in a framework that augments Social Cognitive strategies by increasing the adolescents' skills to manage affect and self-regulate. The CARE (Controlling and Regulating Emotions) intervention will target situations in which sexual risk behaviors occur and develop skills that allow adolescents to recognize intense affect, build strategies for tolerating intense affect and interrupt cycles of maladaptive expressions of affect in those situations.

### Significance

A recent review of HIV preventive intervention trials for adolescents found that only 57% of interventions were effective in reducing sexual risk behavior. The review found that the theoretical foundation for 18 of the 22 studies was Social Cognitive Theory. The limited success of previous interventions suggests the need for examining new models that build on the success of Social Cognitive models in promoting risk reduction among adolescents.

One of the underlying systems for influencing behavior that is often underutilized in preventive interventions is emotion regulation. Because of the systemic connection between cognition, affect, and behavior, adolescents who are better at managing their feelings are better able to manage their behavior. More specifically, adolescents that are better able to manage their emotions are less likely to resort to less functional means for coping with their intense emotions, such as unprotected sex or substance use.

**Project End Date:** December 2009