

Alameda Research Coalition (ARC)

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Project Description

CAPS and the AIDS Project East Bay (APEB) will build a coalition of health sciences investigators at UCSF, community-based organizations that serve the African American community, and community members to answer significant scientific STI/HIV research questions.

We aim to:

- Develop a research coalition to identify significant research questions and design, implement and disseminate appropriate and scientifically-rigorous research projects that address STI/HIV health disparities in the African American community
- Increase the capacity of the members of the research coalition to participate in community collaborative research projects through relationship building activities, specialized trainings and forums
- Develop an electronic infrastructure to support, grow and ensure sustainability of the coalition and activities by archiving coalition trainings and forums, facilitating communication among coalition members, and providing a forum for support and problem-solving among the subgroups of the coalition
- Stimulate and develop innovative research by providing funding to conduct pilot research that will yield data for collaborative presentations at national conferences and provide preliminary data for use by academic and CBO researchers when submitting future R01 grant proposals to NIH.

Significance

CBOs are typically in direct, daily contact with individuals most at risk for STI/HIV infection. However, CBO members often express frustration both at having researchers approach them in a perfunctory manner to provide access to participants for studies that were not relevant to their community's needs, and at not having access themselves to the research process, including investigation of the issues they identified as most pressing. Accomplishing the goal of reducing STI/HIV disparities requires that community partners be involved in every aspect of the science, from formulating research questions to evaluating interventions in real life settings and disseminating findings.

This research coalition presents a model of authentic community engagement via collaborative research projects, as opposed to a model where the academic researcher conducts a study with the CBO mainly providing access to clients and being excluded from involvement in the research process. By bringing the skill of scientists to the service of HIV prevention and the knowledge of service providers into the domain of research, we can more adequately understand and address the contexts and factors that result in STI/HIV health disparities among African Americans.