

## # 1 | WOMEN LIKE ME SUPPORT GROUP

**Category:** Social Service and Peer Support

**Agency:** Adult Special Care Clinic

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**State:** Mississippi

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**Subpopulation:** African American and Latina Women

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**Regional Group:** Mississippi

**Evidence of Improvement:** Yes

**Other Data:** N/A

**Intervention:** Established a young women's support group for pre- and post-natal recent mothers, with advising from mental health coordinator and medical director, focusing on coping with HIV and becoming new mothers.

### Change Ideas:

- Gathered referrals from providers, and reached out to patients directly to refer them to support group program
- Ensured privacy of support group participants by holding meetings in discrete settings, no signage or visual indicators
- Provided transportation assistance to support group participants, gas vouchers, taxi pickup service

### Intervention Description:

CenteringPregnancy is a women's peer support intervention implemented among HIV-positive women in the U.S.,<sup>1</sup> which has shown that participants have a lower proportion of missed appointments and no preterm births when compared with the standard care group.<sup>2</sup> The "Women Like Me" support group was established to reach young HIV-positive pre- and post-natal recent mothers coping with HIV, with advising from a mental health coordinator and medical director. This support group was expanded from a previous support group for postpartum women to also include young women ages 18-40 years who recently had young children or who expected to have children in the future. Women 40 years and older could join if they were postpartum. The support group was started in January 2019 originally with six members but has grown to 15 active members with an average attendance of 14-16 participants as of July 2019. Support group meetings were a time for exchanging experiences and included topic discussions such as mental health, safe sex/dating, self-esteem, legal aspects of being HIV-positive, disclosure of HIV status to sexual partners, birth control, intimate partner violence, and importance of viral suppression during pregnancy. Guest speakers were often invited to the meetings, such as people from the MS Urban League and MS Center for Justice. To ensure privacy of support group participants, meetings were held in discrete settings with no signage or visual indicators of the support group. Transportation assistance (i.e., gas vouchers and taxi pickup service) was provided to participants. Viral suppression for the African American and Latina women subpopulation

<sup>1</sup> Eppes C, Smith H, Davis V, Levison J. Improving postpartum retention in care among women living with HIV: a new approach [Abstract]. 7th edition of the International Workshop on HIV & Women, Abstract 72; 2017. Available at <http://regist2.virology-education.com/2017/7hivwomen/Abstractbook.pdf>. [Accessed May 13, 2020].

<sup>2</sup> Villar-Loubet O, Diaz-Mendez N, Smith L, Jaramillo S, Echenique M, Potter JE. Implementing and adapting a group prenatal care program for HIV-seropositive women. 2016 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care and Treatment. 2016.

increased from 85.3% before the support group to 90.2% afterward. Viral suppression among women in the 18-40 years age group increased from 79.5% to 83.9%. Among women over 40 years, viral suppression increased from 89% to 90.6%. The support group has further grown to 20 active members at present and is now led by a participant hired by Adult Special Care Clinic as a Peer Advocate. This support group is currently expanding outside of Adult Special Care Clinic to other HIV care clinics in Jackson, MS.

<p><i>Do you have measurable data to demonstrate the effectiveness of this intervention?</i></p> <p><b>Yes</b></p>	<p><i>How effective was this intervention to increase viral suppression or reduce HIV disparities? (Scale from 1-4)</i></p> <p><b>4-Highly Effective</b></p>	<p><i>What are the start and end data points for the intervention to indicate the measurable impact?</i></p> <p><b>BAAL VSR = 85.3% - 90.2%</b>  <b>- 18-40 years = 79.5% - 83.9%</b>  <b>- ≥ 41 years =89% - 90.6%</b></p>	<p><i>Was this intervention tested/implemented during the Collaborative?</i></p> <p><b>Yes</b></p>
<p><i>Is this intervention replicable across other HIV subpopulations of the Collaborative?</i></p> <p><b>Yes</b></p>	<p><i>How do you rate the ease of replication of the intervention by other HIV providers? (Scale from 1-4)</i></p> <p><b>Don't Know</b></p>	<p><i>How much financial support do you estimate was necessary to test your intervention per patient? (\$-No Additional Agency Costs; \$\$-1 to 49 US Dollars; \$\$\$-50-99 US Dollars or more; \$\$\$-100 or more US Dollars; Don't Know)</i></p> <p><b>\$\$</b></p>	