

TOUCH POINTS

IN PAN-VIRAL TESTING AND LINKAGE TO CARE

Exploring Partnerships
Between Campus Health
Centers and Community-
Based Nonprofits to Enhance
Sexual Health Services for
Students

**A Case Study of D.C.'s Us Helping Us,
People Into Living Inc., Howard University, and
Prince George's Community College**

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Introduction

College students are in the age bracket (15-24) with the highest rates of the sexually transmitted infections (STIs) — gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis — as well as high rates of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, according to the CDC. Within that age bracket, gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men and Black people are disproportionately affected by STIs and HIV. In 2023 Black people made up 32% of all cases of gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis despite making up less than 13% of the population. Given these statistics, it is perhaps not surprising that Black men who have sex with men are [especially disproportionately](#) affected by STIs.

Colleges and universities serve as key touch points in the community to increase awareness of STIs and fill gaps in services, especially in states with restrictive policies or fewer providers and facilities delivering sexual and reproductive health care. These settings are often the first independent healthcare experience for young adults. However, the range of sexual health services offered by colleges and universities varies. The American College Health Association's 2022 [Sexual Health Services Survey](#) surveyed 209 schools evenly distributed through the U.S., the vast majority of them four-year private or public institutions. While more than 90% of them offered pregnancy testing, STI/HIV testing, and contraception services, only two thirds of them offered the highly-effective daily oral medication known as **PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis)** and only half offered the month-long course of HIV medication to prevention infection after possible exposure known as **PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)**. It is notable that positivity rates for syphilis have steadily increased in the last ten years. Not all colleges and universities have resources to offer the full range of sexual health services on-campus. Approximately 50% of those surveyed by ACHA partner with their local health department, local community health center, and/or community-based organizations to deliver those services.

► **PEP:** Acronym for post-exposure prophylaxis. PEP is medication to prevent HIV after a possible exposure. Taking PEP within 72 hours (3 days) of potential HIV exposure (like condom breakage or needle sharing) can stop the virus from infecting the body. It involves a 28-day course of pills, working best the sooner it's started.

► **PrEP:** Acronym for pre-exposure prophylaxis. PrEP is medication that can reduce the chance of getting HIV. PrEP medication can be taken daily as pills or via injection (every two months or every six months). It significantly reduces risk of HIV acquisition when used as directed.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) offer unique abilities to support colleges and universities in their delivery of HIV and STI services. CBOs are local non-profit entities run by and for community members, providing essential services, resources, and advocacy to address specific local needs like health, education, or housing. CBOs are characterized by having their leadership and staff from the community they serve, with operations based locally, making them uniquely positioned to tackle community-specific challenges. The following resource examines one local CBO — **Us Helping Us (UHU), People Into Living, Inc.** — that has generated partnerships with colleges and universities in their area. Through a case study of UHU and its partner colleges/ universities, HealthHIV identified two distinct partnerships: both of which have increased culturally-competent HIV and STI testing and linkage to care on college/university campuses. **Despite the available resources, space or other perceived constraints, any type of college/university can find ways to engage with local CBOs to provide HIV and STI testing and linkage to care on campus.**

► **Us Helping Us (UHU), People Into Living, Inc.** is a longtime D.C.-based nonprofit that has been offering HIV and other sexual health services with a focus on Black men who have sex with men and other sexual minorities, like transgender women, since 1985. The experienced community-based organization (CBO) has two locations in the greater Washington, DC area, including a certified, freestanding mental health clinic, and works tirelessly to achieve health equity for underserved and marginalized populations in the greater Washington, DC area. UHU developed unique partnerships with Howard University, Prince George's Community College (PGCC), Bowie State University, and Morgan State University to deliver HIV and STI testing and other sexual health services on their campuses.

Executive Summary

The key findings/conclusions from this case study of two partnerships are summarized below. Considerations and recommendations that other colleges/universities may implement follows at the end of this resource.

	PARTNERSHIP 1 - HIGHLY-RESOURCED UNIVERSITY	PARTNERSHIP 2 - LOW-RESOURCES COMMUNITY COLLEGE
College/University Type/Size/ Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Private, four-year historically Black university (HBCU) with undergraduate population of about 10,000 ▶ Requires first- and second-year students to live on campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Public, two-year community college with about 11,300 students ▶ Student body is mostly Black and Hispanic students, with Asian and white percentages both under 10% ▶ Commuter college with no campus housing or meal plan
Student Health Center (SHC) Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ SHC is open Monday-Friday and provides healthcare services to students for acute sickness, injuries, contraception management, chronic disease management, referrals to specialists, health promotion, and disease prevention education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ SHC is open Monday-Friday and offers students physical and mental health services, and provides awareness and prevention services related to sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking.
CBO-College/ University Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ University has partnered with CBOs for HIV and STI testing since 2017 ▶ University offers CBO a private office in SHC to deliver services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ College has partnered with CBO for two years; prior to the collaboration the college occasionally had outside groups come in to do HIV testing ▶ College offers CBO a table set-up in the hallway outside the WMHC
Frequency of CBO Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Most business hours every Wednesday and Friday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Every other Wednesday from 9am to 1pm
HIV/STI-Related Services Offered by CBO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO provides free and confidential finger-prick instant testing for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis C, and urine/swab testing for STI testing (syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea), condoms, sexual health educational materials, PrEP and doxyPEP, as well as housing assistance, food, clothes, toiletries, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO provides free and confidential finger-prick instant testing for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis C, condoms (including “female condoms”), take-home HIV tests and informational pamphlets. CBO does not provide the urine/swab tests (chlamydia, gonorrhea) at college due to space/confidentiality limitations.
Funding Model Utilized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO provides all testing services to students free of charge. ▶ University offers a variety of care and treatment to students who are covered by insurance: either the student health plan, their parents’ plan or Medicaid (a requirement of enrollment) to cover care and treatment costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO provides all testing services to students free of charge. ▶ College <i>does not</i> mandate health insurance for all students, but does offer student health plans.
Staff Resources Utilized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO provides health educators/ community health workers to interface with students and test onsite ▶ University provides dedicated health educators to collaborate/ engage with CBO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO provides health educators/ community health workers to interface with students and test onsite ▶ College <i>does not</i> provide any dedicated staff to collaborate with CBO
Data Sharing Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO notifies university/SHC of positive results in the student’s SHC chart. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ CBO <i>does not</i> transmit test results (including positive results) to the college.
Linkage to Care Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Students have the choice of treatment for HIV/STIs at SHC or one of two CBO sites within five miles of campus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Students may access sexual health testing and treatment via the CBO, local health department, or an off-campus private doctor or clinic.
Marketing/ Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Services are promoted via the University’s social media platforms, ads on hookup apps including Grindr, fliers posted around campus, and CBO presence at campus events. The University also hosts a monthly “Know Your Status” event on the school’s main yard that engages casual passersby who may not otherwise make a visit to the SHC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Services are promoted via the college’s social media platforms, fliers posted around campus, and CBO presence at campus events.
Key Value Added by Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The CBO is able to engage students in a way the University SHC cannot: CBO staff are majority young, Black, and represent a range of sexual orientations and gender identities that are reflective of the student body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The CBO has enhanced and strengthened sexual health services at the college by bringing both material services as well as a warmer and more informal peer-led entry point to HIV/STI services.

Partnership 1: UHU and Howard University

Howard University, established in 1867, is a private, prestigious historically Black university with an undergraduate population of about 10,000 and tuition of about \$38,000. Howard is a four-year school that requires first- and second-year students to live on campus. The Howard University Student Health Center (SHC) provides quality healthcare services to full-time and part-time students with access to care for acute sickness, injuries, contraception management, chronic disease management, referrals to specialists, health promotion, and disease prevention education.

Since 2017, Howard has partnered with outside agencies to bring HIV and STI testing to campus. At one point they invited staff from UHU to a campus health event and the students really enjoyed having UHU and loved the energy they brought. **UHU staffers were majority Black and also represented a range of sexual orientations and gender identities that were reflective of the student body** (e.g. gay, bisexual men and nonbinary). Some UHU staffers also are HIV-positive themselves. UHU staffers were able to meet the students where they are: they listened to the students' stories and concerns about their sex lives without judgment.

Since then, UHU has provided HIV and STI testing on campus. **Students are alerted to UHU services at Howard via the school's social media platforms, ads on certain sexual hookup apps including Grindr, fliers posted around campus and UHU staffer presence at campus pop-up events.**

HIV and STI Testing and Linkage to Care

For the majority of business hours every Wednesday and Friday, UHU services are available to students in a private office in Howard's SHC. If students are STI symptomatic or show sexual trauma, a Howard health educator connects them immediately with a SHC health provider. If they are asymptomatic, but want testing (many active STIs are asymptomatic), Howard health educator conducts STI and HIV testing precounseling, then they can receive free and confidential testing in the private office by a UHU staffer.

Students can choose a finger-prick rapid test for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis C that gives results in a matter of minutes and/or a urine sample and throat and rectal swab for chlamydia and gonorrhea. Results are available from UHU directly to the student in three to five days. Students are also asked if they need condoms, Plan B (emergency contraceptive pills) or sexual health educational materials.

Some students come to the UHU office at the SHC just to have questions about HIV and STIs answered by a peer who is also an expert they can trust. UHU staff try to create an atmosphere of open conversation. They are trained to help ease into uncomfortable conversations and create a safe space for discussing sexual health. Most of the students have heard of PrEP and know that HIV can be easily managed with a once-daily pill. Fewer are knowledgeable about doxyPEP and that people with HIV who are on steady treatment are unable to transmit the virus sexually—a fact known in shorthand as “undetectable = untransmittable,” or more simply “U=U.”

► **DoxyPEP:** Acronym for doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis. DoxyPEP is a medication taken after sex to prevent bacterial sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. Taking doxyPEP within 72 hours after sex can help individuals reduce their chances of getting STIs.

HIV and STI Care and Treatment

If a student tests positive for any STIs, they are counseled on course of treatment and asked if they'd like to be treated at the Howard SHC or at one of UHU's two sites in DC: both of them within five miles of campus. Howard staff also are notified of positive results to enter in the student's SHC chart. All Howard students are covered by the student health plan, their parents' plan or Medicaid – a requirement of enrollment.

When students test positive for a non-HIV STI, UHU staffers often bring the treatment medication to campus to save the student a trip to UHU. A Howard health educator, Lakisha Owens, recalls one instance when a student tested positive for HIV, and the individual and their two friends were instantly escorted in an Uber by a UHU staffer to UHU for confirmatory testing. "The student loved how they were supported, with everyone showing care and compassion," she says.

Biomedical HIV Prevention

Students interfacing with both SHC and UHU staff also are offered the HIV preventive daily oral regimen PrEP (they are not offering injectable PrEP at this time) and/or doxyPEP (a single 200mg dose of the antibiotic doxycycline that has been proven to significantly reduce one's risk of getting syphilis, gonorrhea or chlamydia if taken within 72 hours of sexual exposure). Since it was FDA approved in 2012, more and more students sign up to be on PrEP every year.

Holistic Support Services

UHU's presence at Howard is effective due to the personal, peer-driven and holistic way that UHU staff interact with students. Not only do they provide STI prevention services and linkage to care, but also other services that support whole-person wellness, including housing or food insecurity. UHU has helped students get housing assistance, food, clothes, toiletries, and things that wrap around core health care needs.

UHU staffers at SHC also ask students gentle questions to screen for mental health ("How often in the past two weeks have you felt little pleasure or interest in doing things?") and substance or alcohol abuse ("Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking or drug use, or have you yourself felt badly about it?") Staffers will connect students who express interest in getting help with these issues to substance use or harm reduction services at UHU.

Special Events

Another opportunity for students to interface with UHU staff occurs at the monthly HU Know Your Status event the SHC hosts on the school's main yard, which offers free and private STI testing in a context that engages casual passersby who may not otherwise make an explicit visit to the SHC.

Partnership 2: UHU and PGCC

Prince George's Community College (PGCC), is a two-year public school with about 11,300 students and tuition maxing out at about \$6,500. The student body is mostly Black and Hispanic students, with Asian and white percentages both under 10%. PGCC is a two-year commuter college with no campus housing or meal plan. The PGCC Wellness and Mental Health Center (WMHC) offers students physical and mental health services. The center also provides awareness and prevention services related to sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking.

For PGCC, the partnership with UHU appears especially valuable because the school had little HIV/STI testing prior. Before its collaboration with UHU, which started about two years ago, the school occasionally had outside groups come in to do HIV testing but no one to also test for other STIs. Students generally had to go to the local health department for comprehensive testing—a 20-minute drive from campus.

Now, every other Wednesday from 9am to 1pm, a UHU community health worker, sits at a table in the hallway outside the WMHC equipped with “freebies” that students appreciate, including condoms (sometimes flavored!), “female condoms” that can be inserted into the vagina or rectum, take-home HIV tests and informational pamphlets. UHU staff also take student questions about sexual health.

HIV and STI Testing and Linkage to Care

Students are offered finger-prick instant results for HIV, syphilis and hepatitis C testing, but UHU doesn't provide the urine/swab tests (with results in three-five days) that UHU offers at Howard. Data from student interactions (even including positive test results) are not transmitted from UHU to PGCC.

HIV and STI Care and Treatment

Since PGCC's WMHC offers no sexual health testing or treatment of its own, students may access those via UHU, the health department or an off-campus private doctor or clinic. WMHC has a doctor available for consultation, but there is no campus doctor. WMHC often will send students who come in complaining of possible STI symptoms directly to the UHU site. Students prefer this to visiting the local health department (where they can also go), because WMHC is able to call ahead to UHU to reduce their wait time and UHU is much more personal in their approach.

HIV and STI Education

Most PGCC students show up at UHU's on-campus hours for condoms and lubricant, as well as to ask such questions as *How do you put on a condom?*, *How long does the condom last?*, and *How long does it take for HIV or other STI symptoms to show up?* UHU staff will take the opportunity to ask the students if they know about PrEP, PEP and doxyPEP.

Among women who've come to see UHU staff, many want to be tested for HIV and STIs because they feared that their male partners were cheating. UHU staff inform all female patients about PrEP, but of roughly 50, only two or three have adopted PrEP. This reflects national statistics of women and PrEP—particularly Black women, who have gone on PrEP at [very low levels](#) despite being at much higher risk of HIV than U.S. women overall.

Value of Partnerships to Enhance Sexual Health Services

Howard and PGCC both attest that UHU has enhanced and strengthened sexual health services at their schools by bringing both more material services as well as a warmer and more informal peer-led entry point to such services.

Said Howard representative: “The partnership has connected students to UHU services that we don’t have access to, such as case management on housing or food insecurity, or getting bills paid. They’ve helped connect more students to PrEP than I could do alone. And they bring relatability.”

Said PGCC representative: “In addition to providing regular, reliable on-site testing at PGCC, Jeremie from UHU is young and energetic, so students can relate to him when he starts up those educational conversations. I hope he can come forever.”

UHU staff bring customer service, but also personal stories. Both UHU staff members working at Howard and PGCC are living with HIV. They are able to serve as peer models for the students: demonstrating that you can live successful, healthy, happy lives with HIV.

UHU is also to provide personalized, red-carpet services for people diagnosed with HIV, and same-day PrEP starts. Students feel a sense of community and camaraderie from staff of UHU: they don’t talk to students like a nurse or a doctor, but more like a best friend or family member. They wear sneakers and jeans and greet people with “Hey, friend,” or “Hey, pal.”

An added benefit for UHU: staff’s interactions with students at both schools leads to new patients/clients for UHU.

Considerations for Potential Partnerships Between CBOs and Colleges/ Universities

Those spoken to for this report gave tips leading to a blueprint for other schools that would look somewhat like this:



Start with a Search

Begin by searching for sexual health centers in your area or reach out to national organizations like Planned Parenthood or the American Sexual Health Association to find potential partners.



Find the Right Fit for Your Campus

Look for a sexual health agency whose mission reflects your student body—especially organizations with a track record of serving communities like yours, including BIPOC and LGBTQ students.



Align on Values and Passion

Choose a partner whose values align with your school's, and whose staff are genuinely passionate about working with students and building trust.



Test the Waters with a One-Time Event

Plan a free, on-campus sexual health event—like confidential HIV/STI testing—to kick off the partnership and gauge student interest.



Ask for Feedback

After your event, gather student feedback through a quick survey to understand what worked—and what could be better next time.



Keep Students Engaged with Free Resources

Encourage your partner agency to bring free condoms, lube, brochures, and other goodies during each visit. Free stuff draws students in and sparks important conversations.



Build a Sustainable Relationship

If the first event goes well, work with your new partner to build a long-term collaboration that keeps your campus sexually healthy and informed.