

## A Meeting of the Scale It Up Youth Community Advisory Board



The Scale It Up (SIU) Youth Community Advisory Board (YCAC) is an important element of forging collaboration and engagement across research communities concerned with HIV prevention and treatment among youth. In late July 2017, the SIU YCAC met at the Wayne State University Prevention (W'SUP) offices in Detroit for the first time to begin their involvement in SIU. The three-day retreat was made up of 14 extraordinary youth chosen by SIU sites from across the United States – for some of the youth it was their very first time on an airplane! Each and every youth provided valuable feedback

regarding both the SMART and Young Men's Health Project (YMHP) studies – they shared personal experiences, discussed their motivations for joining the YCAC, collaborated with us on brainstorming ways on how our studies should be implemented in the community, and also, at the risk of sounding sentimental, developed a strong bond during those three days.

### Say hello to our Scale It Up YCAC Members!



- Jamal Arrington, 24, Tampa, FL
- Dwayne Cole Jr., 19, Detroit, MI
- Alejandro Fernandez, 22, Tampa, FL (not pictured)
- Jasmine Johnson, 23, Detroit, MI
- Harun "Ronny" Jones, 22, Philadelphia, PA
- Quincy La'Velle, 23, Chicago, IL
- Jamarco Lang, 23, Memphis, TN
- Brian McMorris, 19, Chicago, IL
- David Ortiz, 23, Miami, FL
- Daniel A. Rodriguez, 18, Philadelphia, PA
- Manny Segal, 22, Baltimore, MD
- Taylor Sherlock, 19, Baltimore, MD
- Keiman Washington, 20, Washington, DC (not pictured)
- Lisa Watkins, 21, Memphis, TN

### What did we learn?

Demetria Cain, Co-Lead, and Ruben Jimenez, Recruitment & Retention Director, from the Recruitment & Enrollment Center (REC) at the Center for HIV Educational Studies & Training (CHEST), presented on both the SMART and YMHP studies. The goal was to elicit feedback from YCAC members as well as present findings from Phase I of the YMHP focus groups. Overall, the youth had a positive impression of both interventions and felt that the interventions would greatly benefit other youth. Here are a few highlights from what we learned:

**YMHP** – The YCAC all felt that services that address drug use were needed in their communities. Many shared their own experiences with HIV testing and mentioned that drug and alcohol use was rarely, if ever, discussed. These sentiments were echoed from the W'SUP staff that were also present. We also got a lot of feedback on ways to deliver the YMHP intervention over the phone. Although some youth were apprehensive about phone-based intervention sessions, they provided

insightful suggestions on how to improve this such as supporting the use of a video-based chat, allowing participants to “get to know” their interventionist before the sessions (e.g., an introductory video prior to their first session, a profile page with a photo and brief information of the interventionist, etc.). They also provided a lot of insight about marketing the study to youth. Many suggested the use of various social media platforms, innovative incentives to get youth to test and screen for the study, grass roots community-based recruitment strategies, and ideas on the types of recruitment materials that they felt would be most effective.

**SMART** – For a few of the YCAB members, the SMART study was something familiar to them. A couple YCAB members mentioned they had participated in programs where they had received daily phone calls and/or text messaging related to medication adherence efforts. Overall, they all had positive things to say about their experiences. Potential concerns regarding confidentiality were also discussed, with the YCAB providing important suggestions on how we might be able to address these concerns with participants in SMART. They had a lot of questions about the study design of the project, which, admittedly, is somewhat complex. However, not only did they find the design interesting, many youth had suggestions on different methods of how to deliver the intervention more effectively!

In addition to feedback for the YMHP and SMART studies, the YCAB had the opportunity to learn about the amazing work conducted at W’SUP, as well as some of their community partners and leaders in the Detroit area.

We all know how important it is, as researchers, to involve the communities we work with – and the YCAB is a prime example of that. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) principles benefit everyone. It can help ensure our research is being delivered in a way that best meets the needs of the community, as well as bringing in people within the community as partners, not just participants. For our YCAB members, in particular, membership can provide opportunities for leadership development, strengthen self-efficacy, and potentially boost other positive outcomes in their lives – all while enhancing research procedures and outcomes. It’s safe to say that our SIU YCAB members consist of future leaders who will help shape new generations of communities for years to come – and the work we are doing with them is just the beginning.

The REC staff at CHEST would particularly like to give a huge thanks to all the W’SUP staff for their extraordinary involvement in coordinating the first YCAB meeting, as well as the work they continue to do outside of the context of the SIU project. Hearing about the amazing work they’re doing in Detroit was both impressive and inspiring and should not go unnoticed! We are very excited to continue working with them, as well as all the sites chosen to participate in SIU – all of whom were carefully chosen for their inspiring work in the community!

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