

# SAFER SEX SKILLS BUILDING (SSSB)

**Good Evidence – Risk Reduction**

## INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION

### Target Population

- Heterosexually active women in drug treatment

### Goals of Intervention

- Increase condom use
- Decrease unsafe sexual behaviors
- Increase safer sex negotiation skills
- Increase HIV/STD risk awareness

### Brief Description

*Safer Sex Skills Building (SSSB)* is a group intervention consisting of 5 sessions, approximately 90 minutes each, designed to increase HIV/STD risk awareness, condom use, and partner negotiation skills of women attending community outpatient drug treatment programs. Two female counselors deliver the intervention to groups of 3-8 women over 3 weeks, using active problem solving, behavioral modeling, role-play rehearsal, interval practice, troubleshooting, and peer feedback and support. Topics include HIV transmission, testing and counseling, prevention and treatment; personal risk assessment and awareness, triggers, and support; skills for condom use, safer sex negotiation, and safety planning; partner abuse risk assessment; and “slip” behaviors. Special emphasis is placed on women’s safer sex negotiation skills and safeguards against the risk of partner abuse that may result from safer sex assertiveness.

### Theoretical Basis

- Not reported

### Intervention Duration

- Five sessions, approximately 90 minutes each, delivered over 3 weeks

### Intervention Setting

- Community-based methadone maintenance programs and outpatient psychosocial treatment programs

### Deliverer

- Two female counselors

### Delivery Methods

- Demonstration
- Discussion
- Modeling
- Practice
- Role play

## INTERVENTION PACKAGE INFORMATION

The intervention package and training are available as a download from [Clinical Trails Network Dissemination Library](#) at [Safer Sex Skills Building](#).

Please contact **Susan Tross**, Department of Psychiatry, HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, New York State Psychiatric Institute, 1051 Riverside Drive, Unit 15, New York, NY 10032 **with any questions regarding the intervention materials.**

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## EVALUATION STUDY AND RESULTS

The original evaluation was conducted in 12 urban & rural sites distributed across 9 states located in the West (2 sites), Midwest (2 sites), Northeast (4 sites), and Southeast (4 sites). The study was conducted between 2004 and 2006.

### Key Intervention Effects

- Reduced unprotected vaginal and anal sex

### Study Sample

The baseline study sample of 515 women in drug treatment was characterized by the following:

- 58% white, 24% black or African American, 9% Hispanic/Latino, 9% mixed or other
- 100% female
- 54% ≤ 40 years, 46% > 40 years old
- 28% <12 years of education, 38% completed 12 years of education, 34% >12 years of education

### Recruitment Settings

Community-based methadone maintenance programs and outpatient psychosocial treatment programs

### Eligibility Criteria

Women were eligible if they were older than 18 years, participating in drug treatment ≥30 days, had unprotected vaginal or anal intercourse with a male partner in the past 6 months, did not exhibit significant cognitive impairment, and were not pregnant or immediately planning pregnancy.

### Assignment Method

Cohorts of 3 to 8 women (N = 515) were randomly assigned to 1 of 2 groups: SSSB intervention (n = 250) or HIV/STD Education (HE) comparison (n = 265).

### **Comparison Group**

The HIV/STD Education (HE) comparison was a single 60-minute session and delivered to groups of 3-8 women. It included discussions on HIV/STD disease and definitions, transmission, testing and counseling, treatment, and prevention information. The intervention was co-led by a pair of female counselors using a didactic presentation style and question-and-answer format along with flip chart visual materials and handouts.

### **Relevant Outcomes Measured and Follow-up Time**

- Sex behaviors (including number of unprotected vaginal and anal intercourse occasions by partner type and number of partners in the past 3 months) were measured at 3 and 6 months post-intervention.

### **Participant Retention**

- SSSB Intervention
  - 62% retained at 3 months
  - 62% retained at 6 months
- HE Comparison
  - 70% retained at 3 months
  - 67% retained at 6 months

### **Significant Findings**

- At the 6-month follow-up, SSSB intervention participants reported significantly fewer occasions of unprotected vaginal or anal sex than HE comparison participants ( $p < .04$ ).
- Intervention participants who attended at least 3 SSSB intervention sessions reported significantly fewer occasions of unprotected vaginal or anal sex than comparison participants who attended the single HE session at the 6-month follow-up ( $p < .009$ ).

### **Considerations**

- This intervention fails to meet the best-evidence criteria due to retention rates  $< 70\%$  at the 3- and 6-month post-intervention assessments.

## REFERENCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Tross, S., Campbell, A. N., Cohen, L. R., Calsyn, D., Pavlicova, M., Miele, G. M., . . . Nunes, E. V. (2008). [Effectiveness of HIV/STD sexual risk reduction groups for women in substance abuse treatment programs: Results of NIDA Clinical Trials Network Trial](#). *JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome*, *48*, 581-589.

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