



HIV Prevention and Access to Care for HIV-Positive Street Youth, St. Petersburg, Russia



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Abstract

Background:

The estimated number of street youth in St. Petersburg is 10,000, with 75% of them being 14-19 years old. A 2006 study in St. Petersburg found a 37.4% HIV prevalence rate in a representative sample of 313 street youth age 15-19. Most of them exhibit high-risk behaviors such as drug use and unprotected sex with multiple partners.

Intervention:

Since August 2006, DOW together with local partners developed an integrated program to assist HIV-positive street youth and prevent further spread of HIV. The program is comprised of the following elements:

1. **Street outreach** that includes city mapping, risk reduction, psychosocial counseling and referral;
2. **Mobile testing unit** providing volunteer pre- and posttest counseling and rapid HIV testing;
3. **Drop-in centers** for street youth providing basic sanitary and first aid, psychosocial counseling, vocational orientation, tutoring and leisure activities;
4. Short-term **overnight shelter** providing room and board for 8 clients for up to two weeks;
5. **Halfway house** for six HIV-positive drug-involved youth to be open in 2008;
6. A 10-session **risk reduction intervention** with materials and peer education tailored to street youth;
7. **Provider education** and advocacy to reduce stigma and discrimination towards street youth.

Results:

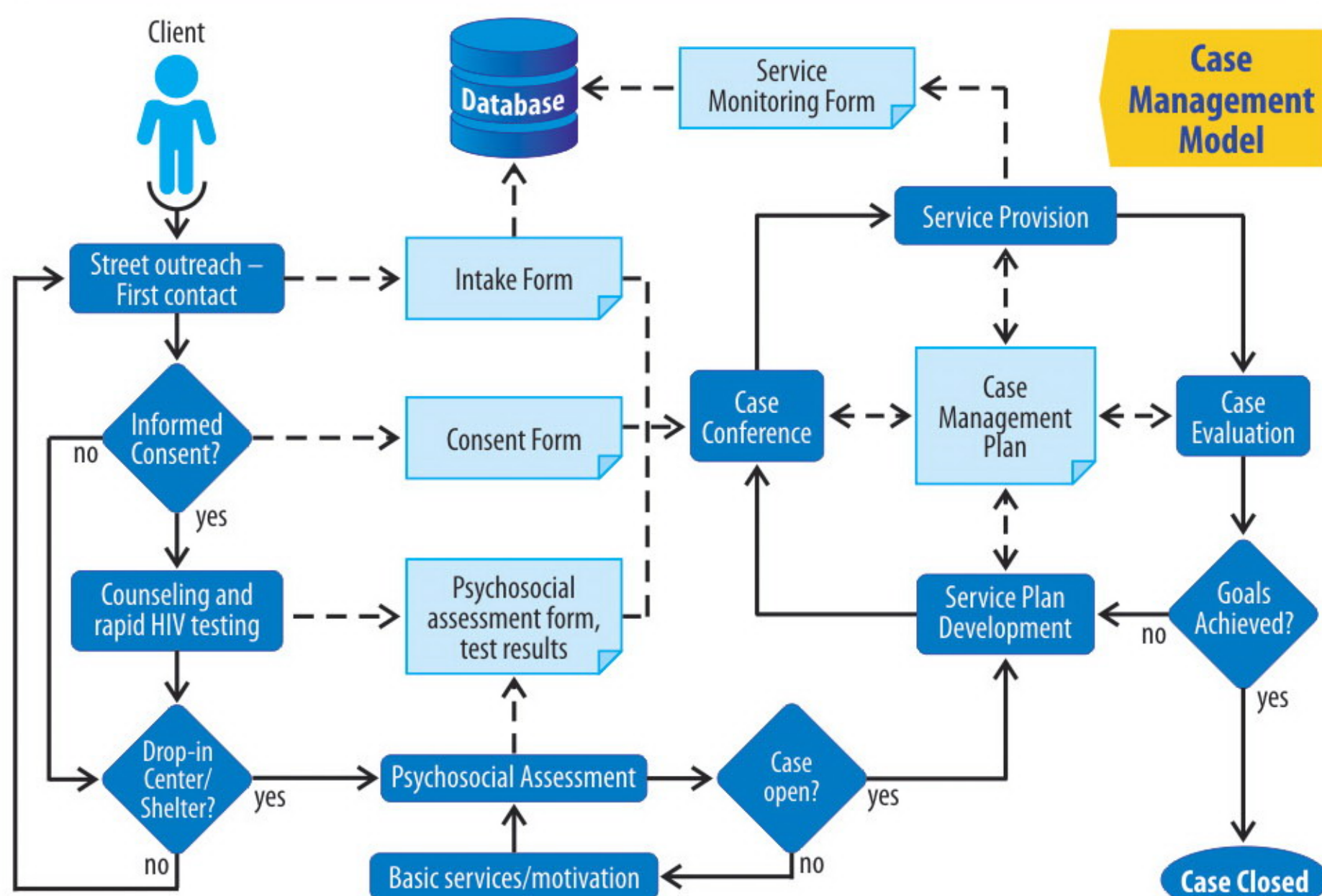
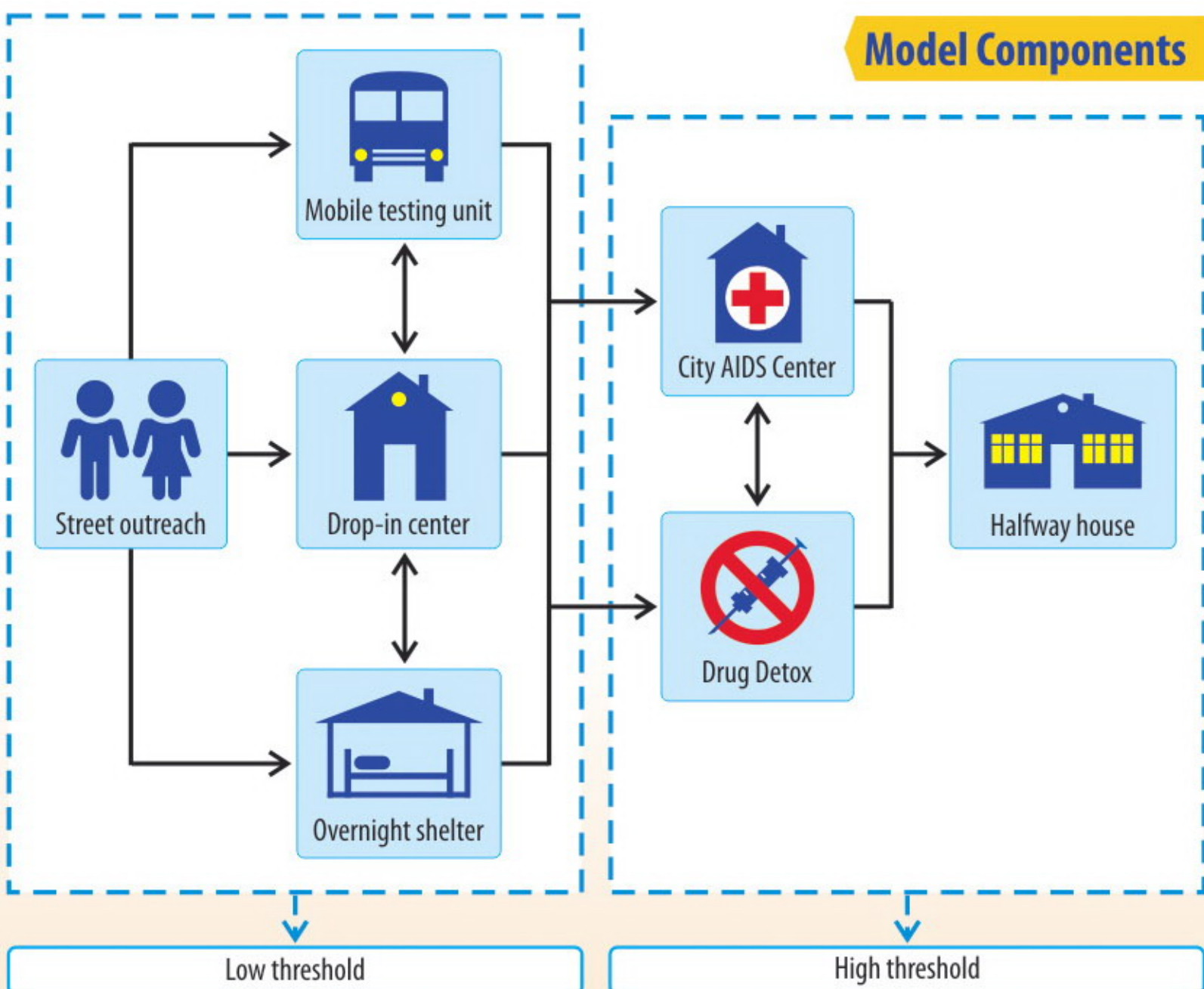
In addition to participants of the 2006 study, 225 street youth tested for HIV with 77 (34.2%) positive results. City AIDS Center provides services to street youth without any prerequisites or barriers to access.

Background*

- Russia has the largest HIV epidemic in Europe and Central Asia with over 420,000 registered cases, 10% concentrated in St. Petersburg
- >80% of cases occur in individuals <30 years old
- Prevalence of 37.4% in street youth 15-19 years old highest for this age group in Europe
- 50.7% lifetime IDUs, 32.9% current IDUs
- 95.5% sexually active, 9.7% exchanged sex for goods, 60.9% multiple partners, 79.6% inconsistent condom use
- Orphans, homeless and previously institutionalized are at higher risk of HIV

* AIDS 2007, 21:2333-2340

Model Components



Challenges

- Lack of drug rehabilitation programs for minors
- Low ARV adherence - low ARV administration rates
- Undeveloped juvenile justice system

Partners

- Local Russian NGO Doctors to Children
- City and Regional AIDS Centers
- City Social Protection Committee and its social service agencies
- Pediatric detox units
- Youth STI clinic 'Juventa'
- Other NGOs working with street youth

Results

- 411 youth served on the streets, over 1,000 through DICs and other services
- 225 youth counseled and tested for HIV
- 132 youth participated in a 10-session risk reduction and prevention course that includes ABC&D components
- HIV knowledge improved by 30% (from mean 8.10 to 10.46 out of 15 points)
- Condom skills improved by 70% (from mean 3.47 to 5.89 out of 7 points)
- Methodological recommendations for assisting street youth published



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