

# Tech-based HIV prevention program proves effective for rural African American families

August 26 2019, by Joan Brasher



PAAS is an online game youths and their parents can do together to open conversation about safer sex practices in order to prevent HIV. Credit: Vanderbilt University

Technology may be a viable option for reducing HIV risk in underserved families in rural communities, according to a new Vanderbilt report.

Researchers designed and evaluated the effectiveness of a technology-

delivered HIV risk prevention program, Pathways for African American Success, to address the comparatively high HIV rates in rural African American communities. PAAS is designed specifically to increase informational access to such communities, which are less likely to have access to in-person HIV support and [prevention programs](#) found in larger cities.

"Our findings suggest that the PAAS technology-delivered program is just as effective as an in-person, facilitator-led small group in dissuading HIV-related risk behaviors among rural African American youths," said lead author Velma McBride Murry. "This fun, interactive program allows families to access sessions at their convenience and own pace, addressing a gap in eHealth digital programs."

Murry, who holds the Lois Autrey Betts Chair in Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt Peabody College of education and [human development](#), collaborated with colleagues at Clemson University and Arizona State University on the study.

They found that compared with families who met with a facilitator in person, those in the PAAS online group demonstrated significantly stronger parent-child communication, including improved discussion quality, clearly articulated norms and parental expectations about risk engagement.

Participants also reported reduced intentions to engage in risky behaviors six months post-intervention.

Technology-delivered programs for HIV prevention also are promising because they are more cost effective and less labor intensive than traditional small group-based preventive intervention programs.

"The Pathways for African American Success: Does Delivery Platform

Matter in the Prevention of HIV Risk Vulnerability Among Youth?" is published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

The team's related study, "The Pathways for African American Success: Results of Three-Arm Randomized Trial to Test the Effects of Technology-Based Delivery for Rural African American Families," is published in the *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*.

**More information:** Velma McBride Murry et al. The Pathways for African American Success: Does Delivery Platform Matter in the Prevention of HIV Risk Vulnerability Among Youth?, *Journal of Adolescent Health* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.02.013](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2019.02.013)

Velma McBride Murry et al. Pathways for African American Success: Results of Three-Arm Randomized Trial to Test the Effects of Technology-Based Delivery for Rural African American Families, *Journal of Pediatric Psychology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1093/jpepsy/jsz001](https://doi.org/10.1093/jpepsy/jsz001)

Provided by Vanderbilt University

Citation: Tech-based HIV prevention program proves effective for rural African American families (2019, August 26) retrieved 24 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-08-tech-based-hiv-effective-rural-african.html>

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