

Overview of Multicultural AIDS Coalition

Founded in 1988, the mission of the Multicultural AIDS Coalition (MAC) is to mobilize communities of color to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We work to ensure high quality, accessible prevention and treatment services for people living with HIV, at high risk for becoming infected, or closely affected by the disease, while supporting broader community efforts to eradicate conditions that fuel the epidemic, such as substance abuse, STIs, and lack of health care access.

Research

MAC is committed to initiating research to answer critical questions that could impact our response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Areas of impact include service delivery, public policy, and advocacy initiatives. Our commitment is to ensure that research is done for, by, and with the subject community. MAC supports a community process of defining shared priorities for improving service delivery and relevant public policy, and mobilizing the community to engage in advocacy to effect change. This process involves forging a partnership between academic researchers, community practitioners, and community members. It is our hope that our joint efforts contribute to demystifying scientific research in communities of color and to strengthening the network of people in our community who understand how to use scientific research to help us improve our work.

Framework for Research

As a research framework, MAC employs the **Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)** approach, which is a...

“...collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all partners in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. CBPR begins with a research topic of importance to the community, has the aim of combining knowledge with action and achieving social change to improve health outcomes and eliminate health disparities.” (WK Kellogg Foundation, *Community Health Scholars Program*)

MAC recognizes that CBPR operates on a continuum. All partners involved determine the level of engagement necessary to ensure the community voices are heard, respected and needs are met. MAC integrates nine key principles of community-based participatory research that support successful research partnerships and are widely cited. (Israel B, Schulz A, Parker E and Becker A. (1998). *Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. Annual Review of Public Health, 19, pp. 173-202*)

These principles ensure that any research partnership:

- Recognizes community as an unit of identity
- Builds on strengths and resources within the community
- Facilitates collaborative, equitable involvement of all partners in all phases of the research
- Integrates knowledge and intervention for mutual benefit of all partners
- Promotes a co-learning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities
- Involves a cyclical and iterative process
- Addresses health from both positive and ecological perspectives
- Disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners

- Involves long-term commitment by all partners

Guidelines for Research Partnerships

Based on the key principles and best practices of CBPR, MAC has developed guidelines for researchers interested in collaborating with the MAC on research projects. The guidelines serve as a “starting point” for discussion with researchers. Prior to engaging in a research partnership, guidelines will be discussed and a formal agreement, outlining each entity’s roles, will be signed according to the priorities of MAC and the researcher, requirements of the project, and needs of the community.

1. Researchers agree to involve MAC in the grant application, including identifying other partners and developing project activities.
2. Researchers agree to share budget details and work with MAC to allocate appropriate funding to MAC responsibilities.
3. Researchers agree to involve MAC in Human Subjects Review Boards and other research protocols to ensure community ethical standards and concerns will be represented.
4. Researchers agree to partnership building with MAC and our network of community partners.
5. Researchers agree to provide capacity building and technical assistance to MAC and its community partners in research areas identified.
6. Researchers agree to build community voice into project activities by allocating funding, time, and other resources to support community participation.
7. Researchers agree to include MAC in the development, writing, sharing and dissemination of all publications and other documents with other researchers, funders, government agencies and representatives, and community members
8. MAC and researchers agree to mutual ownership of the data collected and analysis.
9. MAC and the researchers agree on a data release timeline that responds to the urgent need for impact on MAC’s services, programs, and initiatives, while recognizing the constraints of researchers.
10. MAC and the researchers will periodically evaluate the partnership and make necessary changes to the agreements according to the research project.
11. MAC and researchers will clearly identify and apply the benefit(s) of the research on service delivery, public policy, and/or advocacy initiatives.
12. MAC and the researchers will sustain the partnership beyond the completion of the project.
13. MAC and the researchers will clearly define opportunities for mutual education about the parties’ motivations, interests and background.