

Annual Report

2025/26

Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health



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**Project Funded by The Baltimore City Health Department
Partners in Ending the HIV Epidemic!**

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RnD ASSOCIATES

Global Reach, Local Roots,
Sustainable Impact



Message from CEO

We celebrate the unwavering dedication and compassion that define our community of health ambassadors. Across Baltimore, our Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health program continues to demonstrate the power of grassroots mobilization in transforming lives. We are proud to witness how ordinary individuals dedicated community leaders- youth advocates, educators, returning citizens, barbers, beauticians, faith leaders, entrepreneurs, and peer mentors, are becoming extraordinary changemakers, using their voices and platforms to promote awareness, prevention, and empowerment. This initiative is a movement for accessibility, equity, and dignity.



Our Ambassadors bring essential information about PrEP, PEP, STI testing, and healthy relationships directly to the people who need it most, meeting them in barbershops, churches, school and college campuses, business meetings and housing developments. Their work breaks down barriers of stigma and misinformation, replacing them with understanding, trust, and hope. Through storytelling, dialogue, and local partnerships, they are normalizing sexual health conversations, STI testing and PrEP referral in safe, inclusive, and empowering settings.

Rebka Atnafou, MPH

CEO of RnD Associates

Executive Summary

The Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health Program, implemented by RnD Associates, is a community-driven initiative designed to expand access to sexual health education, reduce stigma, and strengthen referral pathways for HIV and STI prevention across Baltimore City.

Grounded in an Ambassadorial Model, the program mobilizes trusted community leaders to deliver culturally relevant education in settings where residents live, work, and gather.

Over the reporting period, the program demonstrated strong performance across key indicators, exceeding targets in community engagement, education delivery, and institutional partnerships.

The program reached over 1700 individuals in Q1 and Q2, with continued growth in Q3 and Q4 through expanded outreach and partnerships. Community education sessions and overall participation exceeded projected targets, reflecting strong demand and effectiveness of the model.

Evaluation findings show clear improvements in knowledge, awareness, and confidence related to sexual health, HIV prevention, and access to services. Participants reported increased understanding of PrEP and PEP, improved communication skills, and greater readiness to make informed decisions.

While awareness outcomes were strong, HIV/STI testing uptake and PrEP referrals remained below target, highlighting persistent barriers such as stigma, limited access, and behavioral readiness. These findings inform the next phase of implementation, which will focus on strengthening pathways from awareness to service uptake. Overall, the program has established a strong foundation for community-based HIV prevention and is well-positioned to deepen its impact across Baltimore City.



Program Overview



The Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health Program is a community-based implementation model focused on increasing awareness, improving access, and promoting prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

Program Goals

- Raise awareness about HIV, STIs, PrEP, and PEP
- Address barriers to sexual health information and services
- Provide referrals to testing, prevention, and treatment services

Target Areas

The program operates in high-priority ZIP codes across Baltimore City:

- 21215, 21213, 21217, 21218, 21224



Target Populations

The program engages diverse populations, including: Youth and adolescents, Young adults, Returning citizens, Women and families, LGBTQ+ communities, Faith-based communities, Individuals affected by trauma and stigma

Program Model

The Ambassadorial Model leverages trained community members to: Deliver peer-led education, Facilitate discussions, Connect individuals to services, Reduce stigma through trusted engagement

Key activities included:

- PrEP Town Hall Meeting
- Parents Session on Youth and Sexual Health
- Agojie Training Camp
- Black August Community Health Event
- Marcus Garvey Community Health Event
- HIV/AIDS Lock-In Night at Morgan State University





ABOUT RND ASSOCIATES

RnD Associates is committed to advancing sexual health education, prevention, and community empowerment through culturally responsive programs, partnerships, and innovative outreach. We strive to improve health outcomes and reduce disparities in the communities we serve

IMPACT AT-A-GLANCE



1,957

People Reached



27

Events Facilitated



30

No Screened for HIV/STI



130

No Referred for PrEP

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

	Performance Measures	Target	Achievement	Percentage of Target
1	No of community education held	6	27	450%
2	No of people attended community event	1000	1957	193.8%
3	Number of Theatre performances	2	2	100%
4	No of Podcasts	9	8	88.9%
5	No of Social Marketing materials promoting sexual health	7	34	485.7%
6	No of Barbers and beauticians' shops piloting prep	3	4	133.3%
7	Universities Enrolled	3	4	133.3%
8	Faith-based programs enrolled	2	3	150%
9	Youth programs enrolled	9	8	88.9%
10	Health Centers enrolled	1	1	100%
11	Churches enrolled	2	3	150%
12	No of people screened for HIV/STIs	100	44	44%
13	No of people referred to PrEP	100	130	130%

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Expanded community outreach and education
- Strengthened partnerships across universities, faith-based organizations, and health centers
- Increased access to HIV/STI screening and PrEP referrals
- Elevated youth engagement through innovative programming

KEY OUTCOMES

- Increased community knowledge and awareness around sexual health
- Improved access to HIV/STI prevention services
- Stronger community partnerships and collaboration
- Empowered individuals and youth with tools for healthier decisions



Thank you to our partners, funders and community members for your continued support in advancing sexual health, equity and wellness.

TOGETHER, WE ARE CREATING HEALTHIER, STRONGER COMMUNITIES





OWN YOUR ASE X RND ASSOCIATES

RND ASSOCIATES
Health. Equity. Impact.

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION & COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

AUGUST 2025 – APRIL 2025



*Empowering
Communities.
Elevating
Health.
Creating Change.*

In collaboration with RnD Associates, Own Your Ase (Egbe Oya Women's Rites of Passage) delivered **culturally responsive, community-rooted sexual health education** across youth, young adults, parents, and community stakeholders. This initiative centered prevention, education, healing, and empowerment through workshops, panels, trainings, and large-scale events.

IMPACT AT-A-GLANCE



600+

INDIVIDUALS
ENGAGED



18

EVENTS
FACILITATED



55

TOTAL HOURS
OF SERVICE



15-65

AGE RANGE
SERVED



KEY LOCATIONS

- Morgan State University
- Coppin State University
- REACH Partnership School
- Impact Hub Baltimore
- ConneXions High School
- Royal Sonesta Hotel

CORE FOCUS AREAS



SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

- HIV & STI prevention
- Reproductive health awareness
- Testing access & referrals



HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

- Consent education
- Identifying healthy vs. unhealthy dynamics
- Communication & emotional safety



REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- Womb health & contraceptives
- Intimacy & body literacy
- Preventative care practices



COMMUNITY & CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

- LGBTQ+ inclusive care
- Intergenerational communication
- Health equity in Black & Brown communities

SIGNATURE PROGRAMS & HIGHLIGHTS



AIDS LOCK-IN & STUDENT FAIR (Morgan State University)

- 334+ students engaged
- On-site HIV/STI testing (100+ tested)
- Workshops, wellness center, podcast activation
- Condom distribution & PrEP/PEP education



KEEP IT KUJI SIS YOUTH WORKSHOPS

- Focus: Girls (17-19) from Baltimore City Schools
- Topics: HIV prevention, consent, self-worth, decision-making
- Outcome: Increased awareness and confidence in navigating relationships



AKOMA COUPLES RETREAT

- Full-day immersive experience
- Topics: intimacy, reproductive health, communication
- Tools: wellness navigation + PrEP/PEP referrals



PARENT & INTERGENERATIONAL WORKSHOPS

- 36+ parents engaged
- Focus: How to talk to youth about sex, relationships, and prevention
- Outcome: Strengthened family communication pathways

OUTCOMES & COMMUNITY VALUE

- ✓ Increased knowledge of HIV/STI prevention
- ✓ Greater awareness and access to PrEP/PEP
- ✓ Strengthened communication around relationships and consent
- ✓ Reduced stigma around sexual health conversations
- ✓ Expanded community engagement in health equity initiatives



INVESTMENT SUMMARY



TOTAL HOURS

55

×



RATE

\$30/HR

=



TOTAL INVESTMENT

\$1,650

PROGRAM APPROACH

Own Your Ase integrates culturally grounded facilitation, interactive learning, healing-centered engagement, and peer-led education models to ensure participants don't just receive information – they internalize, apply, and share it.

THANK YOU! ❤️

Thank you to RnD Associates for your continued partnership in advancing sexual health education, equity, and wellness in our communities. **TOGETHER, WE'RE CREATING HEALTHIER, STRONGER COMMUNITIES.**

OWN YOUR ASE
c/o Mama Ngina (LaShone Croom)



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Knowledge is Power.
Prevention is Love.
Community is Strength.



Organization Overview

RnD Associates is a community-based research and implementation organization that addresses public health challenges by embedding education, prevention, and service navigation within trusted community spaces. Service areas include training and support, community engagement, community asset and needs assessment and program evaluation.

Mission

To provide human capacity-building services to strengthen the knowledge and skills of service professionals to build more vibrant, healthy, and safe communities

Our Network

RnD Associates coordinates a network of ambassadors from diverse community-based programs, who reach multiple populations throughout Baltimore with powerful messages, training and resources to promote the health, safety, peace, and empowerment of community residents.

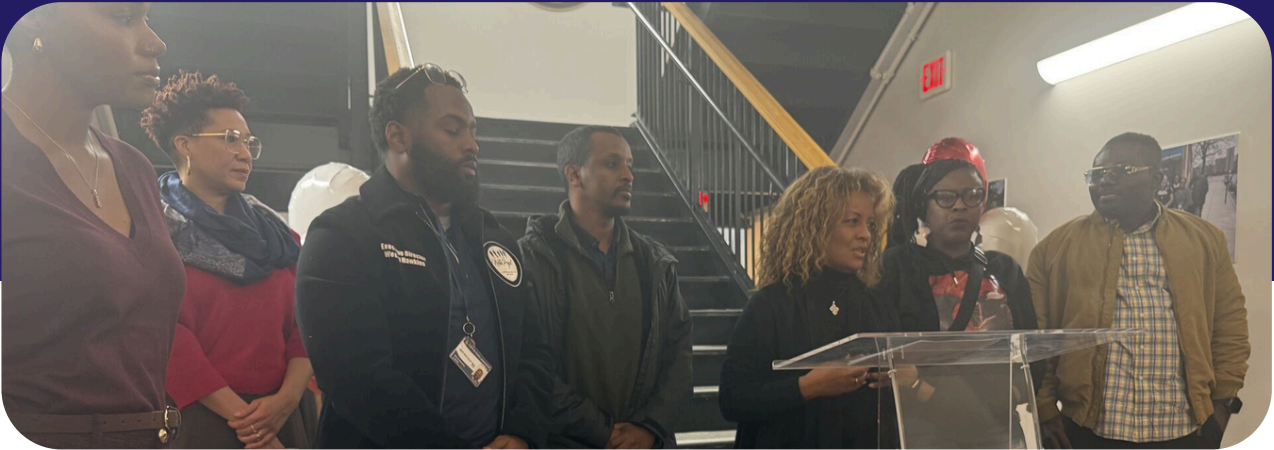


Population of Reach

Adolescents and youth in underserved communities, Young adults navigating social and economic instability, Returning citizens and formerly incarcerated individuals, Men's health populations, Women and girls across life stages, barbershops, beauty salons, and other informal, faith-based communities, persons affected by substance use, trauma, stigma and emotional barriers and LGBTQ+

Community Mobilization Award

RnD Associates was selected by the **Baltimore City Health Department** as the inaugural recipient of the Innovation in HIV/AIDS Community Mobilization Award for 2025.



This award presented by Baltimore City Health Commissioner Dr. Michelle Taylor, affirms RnD Associates' long-standing leadership in community-based reproductive and sexual health, HIV/AIDS education, STD prevention, stigma reduction, and peer-led engagement. This recognition reflects decades of sustained community implementation experience, rooted in trust, responsiveness, and lived understanding of the populations most affected by HIV/AIDS.

RnD Associates' approach is deeply shaped by the professional journey of its Founder and CEO, Rebekha Atnafou-Boyer, whose work in HIV/AIDS began in the late 1980s during the height of the epidemic. Serving as a counselor with the New York City Department of Health, she worked directly with individuals and families facing stigma, fear, and limited access to care.

Those early experiences established a practical, people-first foundation, and It is an honor and a privilege to have a large network of Ambassadors as our committee partners in community mobilization.



RnD Associates provides Training to the LGBTQ+ Community in Baltimore

RnD Associates delivered an interactive learning session on syphilis education and prevention on November 12 as part of the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ+ community gathering in Baltimore. This session reflects RnD Associates' ongoing collaboration with LGBTQ+ communities to promote inclusive, accessible sexual health education. In the U.S., men who have sex with men account for nearly 70% of new syphilis cases, with LGBTQ communities facing higher risk due to stigma and limited access to care. The sessions which was delivered by RnD Members and Ambassadors, focused on boosting awareness, promoting testing, and reducing transmission.

The November 12 event also served as the Ambassadors' monthly training and networking session, reinforcing RnD Associates' commitment to peer-led engagement. By bringing people together to learn and connect, the program continues to build a trusted network that supports community education and outreach.



This integrated approach underscores RnD Associates' long-term commitment to working alongside LGBTQ+ communities to advance inclusiveness, shared responsibility, and collective action toward reducing STIs, including HIV and syphilis, across Baltimore.

RnD Associates brings Community Power to BELN



At a quarterly convening of the Baltimore Entrepreneurship Leadership Network (BELN) hosted at Baltimore Corps, RnD Associates Global served as a central contributor to discussions on community-based sexual health action in Baltimore. Under the leadership of Sally Scott, Director of BELN and senior leader at The Shriver Center at UMBC, the session moved beyond routine network updates to a focused demonstration of how trusted community models address HIV and STI disparities. RnD Associates' Sexual Health Ambassadors contributed structured education, lived experience, and cultural context, establishing a tone of openness, shared responsibility, and readiness for collective action.



The session was led by Founder and CEO Rebkha Atnafou-Boyer and featured contributions from Mama Ngina, Renée Webber of Queens Sisterhood Society, Delayna Watkins of The Women's Wellness Lounge, Jerel Wilson of For My Kidz, Ciera Daniel of God Is Here Media, and Samuel Onwubiko. Presentations linked population-level data to community realities and illustrated how peer-led education, storytelling, and trust-based engagement advance public health objectives. With support from the Baltimore City Health Department, the discussion demonstrated a clear pathway from public health priorities to on-the-ground implementation. By the conclusion of the session, BELN members actively expressed interest in collaboration and support, reinforcing RnD Associates' role as a credible community implementation partner for Baltimore's priority health needs.

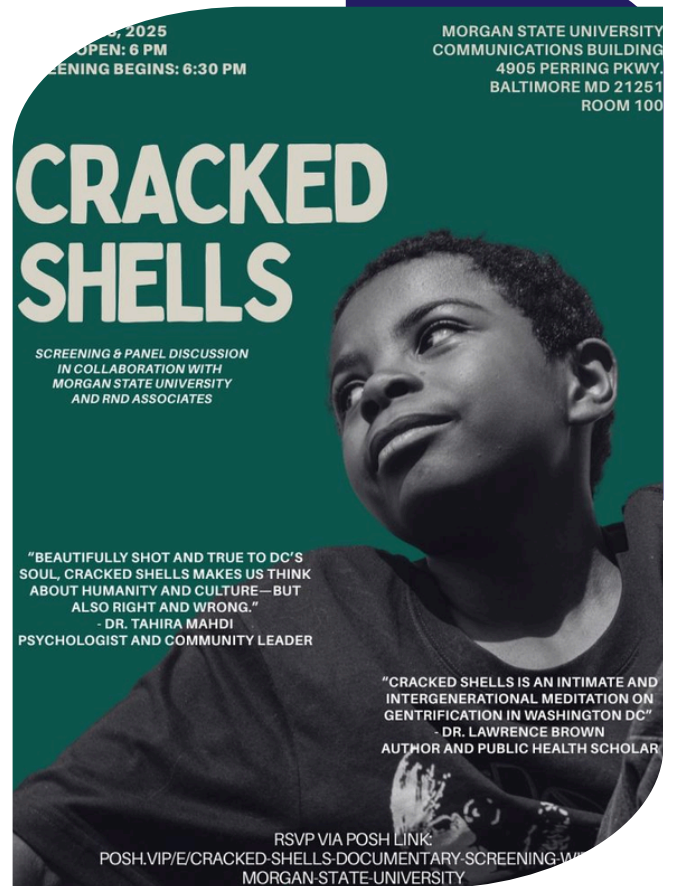


Collaborative Community Engagement through Film and Dialogue

RnD Associates hosted a community-centered film screening at the Morgan State University School of Journalism and Communication in collaboration with the Institute for Research and Urban Development. The event featured *Cracked Shells*, a film directed by Ruth Tedla, which examined gentrification and the transformation of Washington, D.C., often referred to as Chocolate City. The screening created space for critical reflection on how displacement reshapes culture, identity, and long-standing community ties, themes that closely connect to RnD Associates’ broader work on social conditions that influence health and well-being.



These insights reinforced the need for community-led conversations that connect housing, culture, and health, and affirmed the value of creating safe spaces where people can reflect, learn, and respond together. The discussion was moderated by Rebekha Atnafou, who guided a thoughtful exchange between panelists and audience members.



The *Cracked Shells* evaluation highlighted how gentrification directly affects community health, identity, and stability. Over 60% of participants reported a clear increase in their understanding of how displacement harms community wellbeing, while many described the experience as eye-opening and emotionally grounding. One participant reflected that the film “made me think differently about how neighborhoods change and who gets left behind.”



Translational Health Practice: Community-Led Research in Action



RnD Associates' Sexual Health Ambassadors presented findings from their community-based work as part of the Health Promotion, Research, Leadership, and Practice Collaborative (HPRC) Fellowship, supported by the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR). The presentation shared insights drawn from direct engagement with diverse communities across Baltimore, reflecting lived experience, community priorities, and practical approaches to sexual health education and stigma reduction. This milestone confirms the role of community representatives as credible contributors to applied research and knowledge sharing.



The fellowship support from ICTR enabled RnD Associates to connect community practice with academic learning, ensuring that research outputs remain grounded in real-world conditions. By elevating ambassador-led findings within an academic setting, RnD Associates demonstrated a clear pathway from neighborhood engagement to institutional impact. This work strengthens local capacity, informs future programming, and reinforces RnD Associates' standing as a trusted partner for community-implemented research and health promotion across Baltimore.



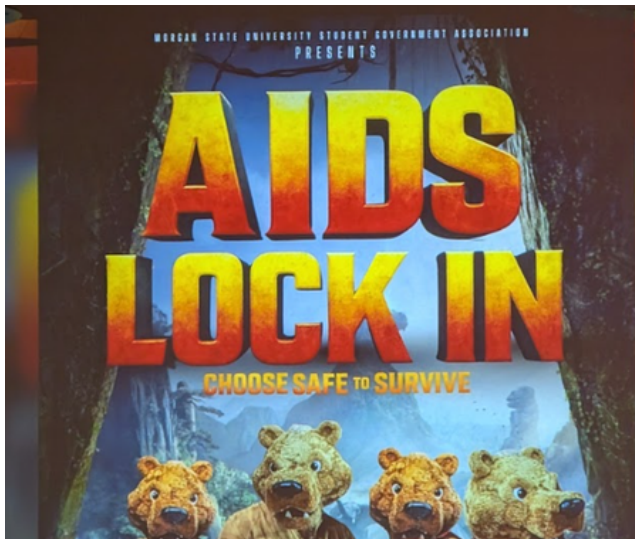


Standing Together for Remembrance, Compassion, and Action. RnD Associates at Baltimore's World AIDS Day Vigil

RnD Associates Global participated in the World AIDS Day Candlelight Vigil held at Baltimore City Hall, joining residents, advocates, and public health leaders in a shared moment of remembrance and commitment. This annual vigil serves as both a tribute to lives lost to HIV/AIDS and a public reaffirmation of support for those living with HIV, while reinforcing the collective responsibility to confront stigma and sustain prevention and care efforts. RnD Associates' presence reflects its long-standing role in Baltimore's HIV/AIDS programming through community education, peer-led outreach, and partnership with local institutions. By standing alongside the community in reflection and solidarity, RnD Associates continues to demonstrate its commitment to keeping HIV awareness visible, honoring lived experiences, and supporting citywide efforts that promote dignity, inclusion, and sustained progress in the response to HIV/AIDS.



HIV/AIDS Lock-in Night at Morgan State University



RnD Associates played a central role in the HIV/AIDS Lock-In Night at Morgan State University by creating an engaging space for education, dialogue, and community connection. Through a dedicated resource table, the team provided students with accurate information on HIV prevention, testing, and sexual health services, while connecting them to local support resources. The panel discussion further deepened engagement, creating an open forum where students could ask questions and share experiences. Panelists emphasized the importance of honest conversations around sexual health, with one speaker noting, "When we talk openly and without judgment, we remove fear and give people the confidence to protect themselves and others."

A key highlight of the event was the storytelling segment led by Coach Dei of Each1Save1 and RnD Associates' Sexual Health Ambassador. Through personal reflection and lived experience, Coach Dei highlighted the power of education and self-advocacy in HIV prevention, reminding students that "knowing your status is an act of self-respect and care for your community." The storytelling approach resonated strongly with attendees, making the message relatable and actionable. Overall, RnD Associates' presence reinforced the importance of culturally grounded education and peer-led engagement in advancing HIV awareness and prevention among young adults.

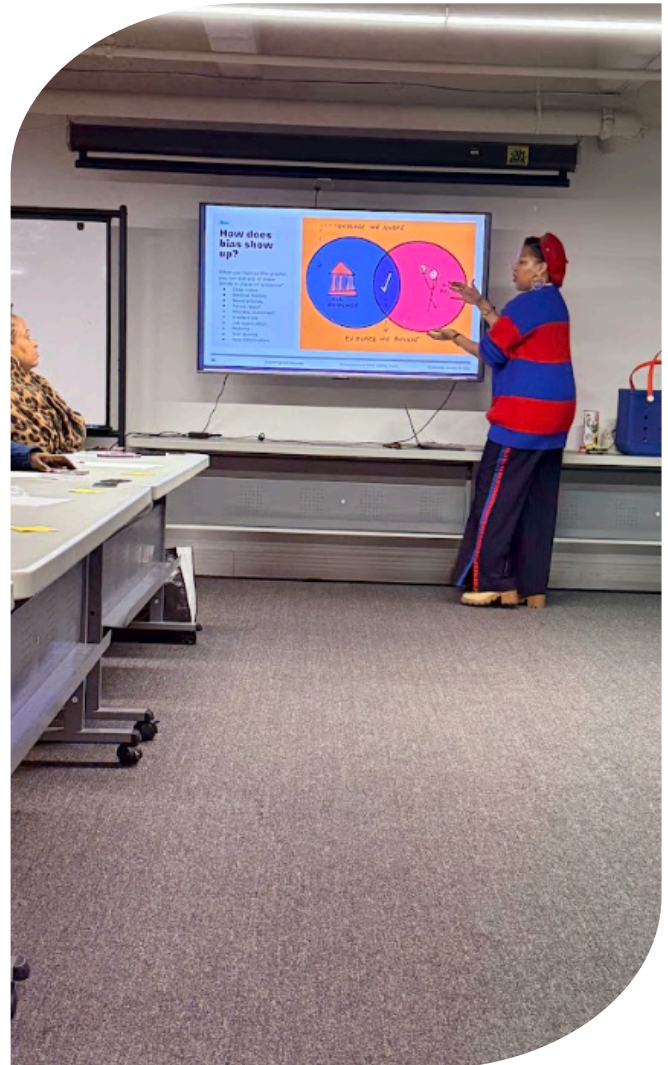


Ambassador Training on LGBTQ+ Youth Inclusive Sexual Health Services

The objective of this training was to strengthen the capacity of community ambassadors to deliver inclusive, affirming, and accurate sexual health education and navigation services to LGBTQ+ youth and underserved communities.

The training covered:

- Understanding sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE)
- Delivering age-appropriate sexual health education
- Creating safe, affirming, and non-judgmental environments
- Addressing health disparities affecting LGBTQ+ youth, including HIV/STI risk
- Effective communication strategies when engaging LGBTQ+ individuals and communities
- Practical application through case-based discussions and interactive learning



Outcomes

- **Improved Knowledge:** Ambassadors demonstrated increased understanding of LGBTQ+ health needs and inclusive service approaches
- **Enhanced Confidence:** Participants reported greater confidence in engaging LGBTQ+ youth in sexual health discussions
- **Service Readiness:** Ambassadors are now equipped to provide culturally competent education, referrals, and support
- **Equity Advancement:** Training directly supports reducing disparities in access to sexual health information and services among LGBTQ+ populations

RnD Associates develops a PrEP Public Service Announcement

RnD Associates through its ambassador **God is Here media**, developed a PrEP Public Service Announcement (PSA) designed to increase awareness, normalize conversations around HIV prevention, and reflect the lived realities of Baltimore communities. The PSA underwent multiple rounds of peer review through key community and professional forums, including the AIDS Action Baltimore–HPG Meeting, a PrEP Town Hall, LGBTQ+ community listening sessions, and review by the Baltimore City Health Department. Across these spaces, the PSA received strong endorsement for its clear messaging, relatable tone, and culturally grounded storytelling. Viewers consistently noted that the use of local imagery, non-copyrighted Baltimore-based music, and real community narratives made the message feel authentic and relatable.



Feedback from these review sessions directly shaped the final version of the PSA. Participants praised the strong representation of women and the intentional challenge to misconceptions that PrEP is only for men or specific populations. Others highlighted the importance of including older adults, faith-influenced audiences, and diverse racial and ethnic groups to better reflect the full spectrum of the community. Suggestions related to inclusivity, age representation, and cultural balance were incorporated into the final product. As a result, the completed PSA reflects community voice, promotes accurate information about PrEP, and supports broader efforts to normalize HIV prevention across all populations. [Watch it on our YouTube Channel](#)



RnD Associates was proudly featured in The Baltimore Times for its impactful work advancing Black women’s health, sexual health advocacy, and community wellness initiatives.



During Minority Health Month, **Delayna Watkins was recognized for her work advancing Black women’s health through** the Women’s Wellness Lounge, a community-centered initiative designed to create safe, judgment-free spaces for conversations around wellness and sexual health.

Building Bridges to Better Health: Dr. Robin Butler Is Training the Next Generation of Sexual Health Advocates at Morgan State.



Whole and Well: One Woman's Mission to Connect Financial Health, Sexual Health, and Everything In Between

Breaking the Silence: Why Sexual Health Is at the Heart of Black Wellness



RnD Associates Evaluation of Nolita Project Focusing on the Youth and Young Adults

The Rising Leaders Program

The Rising Leaders Program, led by The Nolita Project (Ambassador) at The Reach! Partnership School, aims to strengthen school safety, develop student leadership, expand aspirations, and build stronger community connections. During the 2024–25 school year, the program engaged 100 students in grades 9–12, with particularly strong participation from juniors and seniors.

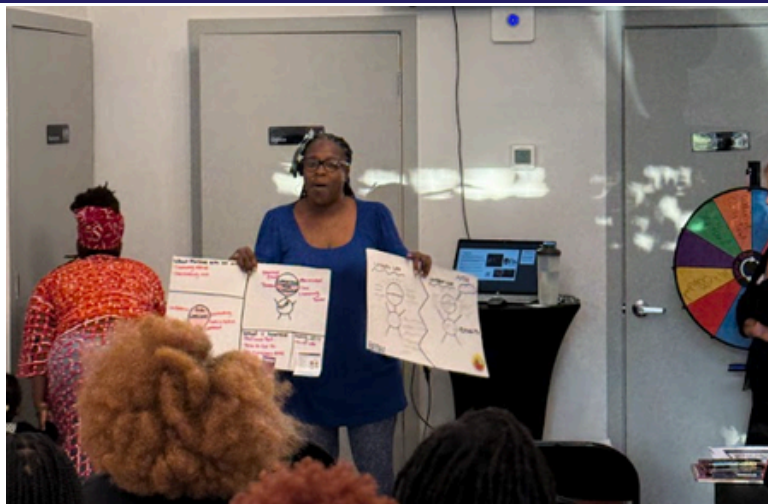
Program strategies included after-school workshops on conflict resolution, civic pride, and cultural heritage; peer mediation, mentorship, and restorative practices; leadership training modules; tutoring and college/career readiness activities; and community canvassing and incident response by culture & climate coordinators.

Key Achievements

Student engagement remained strong throughout the program, with an average attendance rate of 93% and 71% of participants actively involved in extracurricular activities. In terms of safety and school climate, 87% of students reported feeling safe at school. However, many also shared experiences of safety-related incidents and conflicts, suggesting that while overall perceptions are positive, underlying challenges remain. Academically and personally, the program showed positive impact, with 73% of students reporting expanded future aspirations and 64% demonstrating measurable academic improvement.



Sexual Health Ambassadors & Community Champions Meeting



The Ambassadors Meeting served as a deeply reflective and action-driven gathering, highlighting the continued progress and challenges within the Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health initiative. Participants emphasized that raising awareness about PrEP and sexual health is not a quick win but a sustained process requiring patience, trust, and cultural sensitivity. As Rebkha Atnafou noted, “We might feel a bit discouraged that we don’t have the numbers we want... but we have to remember, it’s a process. It’s a process of creating awareness, and we’re not pushing drugs on our people.” This perspective reinforced the importance of meeting communities where they are, acknowledging that promoting PrEP is about offering options and empowering people to make informed choices. Ambassadors agreed that education around safer sex practices must be approached with compassion and persistence, particularly in communities where stigma and misinformation still shape attitudes toward HIV prevention.

A recurring theme in the discussion was the need for intentional relationship-building and culturally grounded touchpoints to foster trust. Mama Ngina from the Egbye Oya Rites of Passage Program described a three-step engagement model rooted in preparation, trusted leadership, and relatability. “We met with the women, we prepped them, we put them through education... you got someone who knows how to empower with words, to coach, to read the room,” she explained, emphasizing how carefully curated spaces build comfort and connection. This emphasis on consistent, relatable engagement resonated throughout the meeting, as ambassadors shared diverse methods they’ve used to educate their communities, ranging from role-play, family conversations, and community events to leveraging platforms like TikTok to reach youth. Participants also discussed the sensitivity needed when addressing sexual health, noting that many married individuals face the same struggles and risks as singles, and that testing, openness, and shared education are vital within families and relationships.

The meeting concluded with a heartfelt discussion on trauma-informed care and the holistic approach needed to sustain both the ambassadors and the communities they serve. As Rebkha reminded, “People that are doing this work... chose to be engaged because of the trauma they experienced as children. They want to shelter others, but they have unresolved trauma.” Similarly, Wesley Hawkins of the Nolita Project shared that his work is deeply personal, saying, “Losing my mother from a drug overdose, being shot myself, having sisters that were raped—it’s personal for me.” His testimony underscored the emotional burden and motivation driving many ambassadors. Wesley further urged for a family-centered approach, explaining that “You can’t just work with youth... the mother, the father, the grandmother—all need that holistic wraparound piece.” These reflections reinforced that sustainable impact requires caring for both ambassadors and families alike.





Baltimore City Health Department conducts site visitation to RnD Associates

On September 10, 2025, the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) conducted a site visit to RnD Associates, the implementing partner for the funded project Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health. This initiative is part of BCHD's broader commitment to addressing HIV disparities and improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes across Baltimore City.

The Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health project, launched in 2025, mobilizes diverse community leaders - barbers, beauticians, faith leaders, returning citizens, women's empowerment advocates, and youth development mentors, to serve as trusted messengers. The project deploys culturally tailored campaigns, testing services, and storytelling-driven outreach to reduce STI infections and increase awareness of preventive medicines such as PrEP and PEP

The site visit was convened by BCHD to:

- Review progress on the Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health project.
- Align activities with BCHD's HIV prevention strategy and Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) goals.
- Assess community engagement approaches and sustainability mechanisms.
- Ensure transparency, accountability, and adherence to project deliverables.

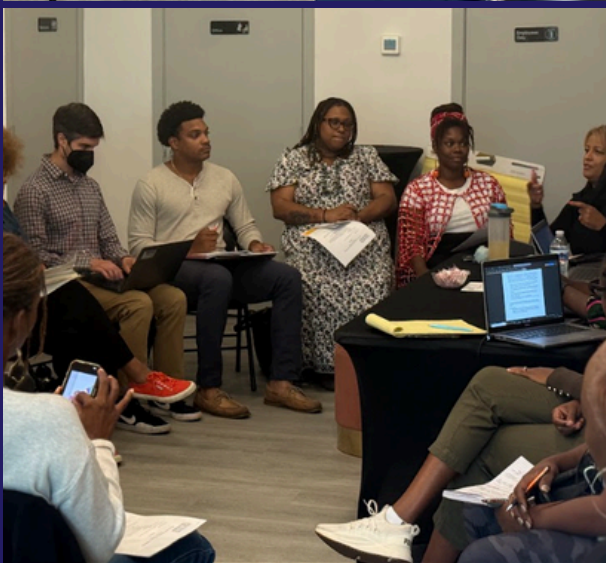
The ambassadors were recognized as critical for reaching diverse populations within the community and were given opportunity to present their to BCHD. The project's partnerships with churches were commended as vital platforms for reframing sexual health narratives.

Storytelling, theatre, and performance-based outreach were highlighted as innovative approaches that resonate with communities often left out of traditional health campaigns.

RnD noted ongoing challenges such as cultural beliefs, low awareness of PrEP/PEP, and skepticism around HIV surveillance data.

The BCHD team praised RnD Associates for:

- Successfully embedding the principle of "one community, one voice, one campaign" through aligned messaging.
- Leveraging trusted community structures (beauty salons, churches, housing developments) to increase uptake of testing and referrals.
- Integrating data-driven decision-making into outreach.



AIDS Action Baltimore - PrEP Town Hall Meeting

The AIDS Action Baltimore – PrEP Town Hall Meeting, held on September 17, 2025, was convened as part of the Partners in Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative, funded by the Baltimore City Health Department. The meeting was designed to facilitate community dialogue on HIV prevention strategies, particularly the role of PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) and PEP (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) in reducing transmission. During the session, lived experiences from community members, barbers, beauticians, and health navigators were shared, highlighting both the progress made and the persistent barriers to care. It was observed that stigma, misinformation, and cultural silence around sexual health remain key obstacles to expanding access and awareness. The meeting emphasized that sexual health promotion must continue to be grounded in community trust, trauma-informed practice, and culturally relevant education.

Considerable success was recorded during the reporting period under the Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health program implemented by RnD Associates. Community-based organizations serving youth, returning citizens, and harm-reduction groups in high-priority ZIP codes - 21215, 21213, 21217, 21218, and 21224 - were mobilized to promote HIV prevention and testing. Core values were formalized through MOUs, and multiple innovations were introduced, including the launch of a sexual health storytelling series, community performances, and a podcast focused on PrEP awareness. Additionally, a nurse practitioner specializing in PrEP navigation was recruited, and a referral system was established to link clients to care. These activities were reinforced by a citywide social media campaign and new public service announcements (PSAs) co-created with community members to normalize conversations about HIV prevention.

Challenges were nonetheless encountered, most notably a low level of interest in STI screening and continued public denial of HIV risk. Despite the availability of PrEP information and referral systems, community resistance, stigma, and misconceptions persisted. Many individuals still viewed HIV as a “gay” or “drug-user” issue, creating barriers to engagement. Parallel difficulties were identified among health providers, some of whom lacked adequate knowledge about PrEP and occasionally responded to client inquiries with judgmental attitudes. In response, targeted community education, provider sensitization, and storytelling-based advocacy were prioritized to counter misinformation. Ambassadors reported that consistent repetition, visible representation of diverse populations, and peer-led dialogue remain essential for shifting perceptions and improving trust in HIV prevention efforts.



Key lessons learned from the Town Hall and subsequent ambassador activities emphasized that diversity among community partners is crucial for reaching varied populations. Storytelling was recognized as a powerful vehicle for both healing and education as demonstrated by Rebkha, but sessions must be supported with mental health resources to mitigate emotional strain among facilitators and participants. The Town Hall reinforced that PrEP awareness takes time and requires persistence, culturally resonant messaging, and community messengers who reflect the populations most affected. Going forward, plans were outlined to expand the ambassador network, enhance local media partnerships, and strengthen data collection and evaluation to track behavioral change. These efforts will ensure that Baltimore's HIV prevention strategy remains rooted in collaboration, credibility, and the lived realities of the communities it serves.

Parents Session on Youth and Sexual Health

A parent-focused presentation on strategies for effective parent/youth communication was held on September 8, 2025, as part of the Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health initiative, with funding provided by the Baltimore City Health Department. The session was facilitated by Rebkha Atnafou, MPH, of RnD Associates, and was designed to equip parents with tools for fostering open, informed, and supportive conversations about sexual health with their children. Emphasis was placed on the rising rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among youth in Baltimore and the need for parents to be actively engaged in early prevention education. It was noted that Baltimore City moved from the #1 to #4 position nationally in STI rates, yet infection rates remain disproportionately high among Black youth, underlining the urgency for community-driven, family-based health communication

Parents were informed that approximately 20 million new STI cases occur annually, with more than 50% among youth aged 15–24. It was emphasized that while many adolescents engage in sexual activity early, most express regret or indicate they were not adequately prepared for such experiences.



A significant portion of the session focused on the importance of relationships as foundational to healthy decision-making. Parents were guided through the characteristics of healthy versus unhealthy relationships and taught how to model respect, empathy, and self-awareness for their children. Activities encouraged parents to reflect on their own teenage years and identify how past experiences shape their attitudes toward youth sexual health. It was stressed that self-esteem, self-care, and emotional awareness are critical for youth empowerment and resilience against peer pressure and exploitation.

The presentation's segment on parent/youth communication highlighted findings from 30 years of data across 52 studies, demonstrating that adolescents who discuss safer sex topics with parents are significantly more likely to use protection.



Parents were trained on conversation strategies such as finding the right time and setting, asking open-ended questions, and maintaining an ongoing dialogue rather than a one-time discussion. The "Guide to Talking to Your Teen" framework was presented, encouraging parents to use teachable moments, communicate values clearly, and maintain a non-judgmental tone. An "open-door policy" was recommended to keep communication continuous and build mutual trust

Parents were also introduced to the structure and purpose of the Youth Sexual Health Training, to be led by Coach Dee and Wesley Hawkins, emphasizing that the youth component promotes safety, abstinence, and informed decision-making rather than permissiveness. The training was described as a professional, research-informed experience focusing on empowerment, protection, and respect for family values. Parents were assured that their engagement is central to the effectiveness of the youth curriculum, as research shows that parental involvement is one of the strongest predictors of positive health outcomes in adolescents

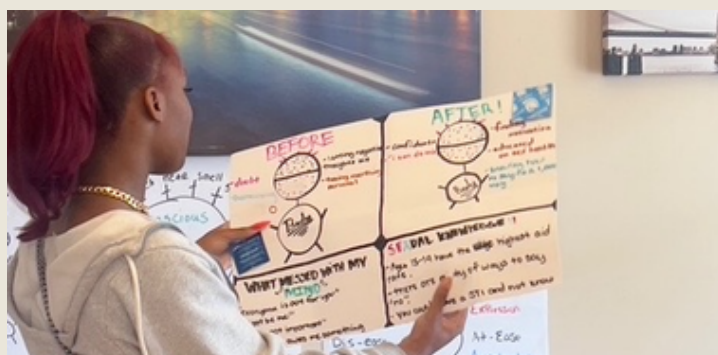
In closing, parents were encouraged to remain active partners in Baltimore's effort to end the HIV epidemic. Contact information for local HIV and STI testing centers and resources, including Druid STD Clinic and Eastern STD Clinic, was provided, along with access to PrEP referrals through RnD Associates and the Women's Wellness Lounge. The session concluded with a collective call to action, urging parents to use knowledge, compassion, and communication as powerful tools in nurturing a generation of youth who are informed, confident, and protected.



Sexual Health & Self-Relationship Building Program

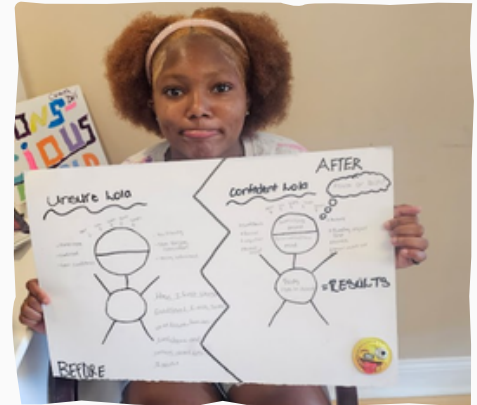
The Sexual Health and Self-Relationship Building Program, facilitated by Each 1 Save 1 in collaboration with the Bridge the Gap Committee of Maryland, was implemented over the summer to equip youth participants with vital knowledge and confidence for making responsible choices. The program blended education, empowerment, and reflection through a five-week curriculum grounded in the Becoming a Responsible Teen (BART) model and Abstinence-Based Sexual Health Education. Participants engaged in open discussions and small group activities that encouraged them to explore topics such as anatomy, personal boundaries, healthy relationships, HIV awareness, and harm reduction, all while promoting emotional intelligence and self-awareness in decision-making. Through a series of structured sessions, youth explored a wide range of topics including STI prevention, sexual responsibility, and communication.

The "Traffic Light" activity was used to help participants identify risk levels in behaviors and build refusal skills, while hands-on condom demonstrations and assertive communication exercises reinforced practical knowledge.



A highlight of the program was the empowerment and reflection session, where participants presented personal insights through the theme “What I Knew Then vs. What I Know Now,” showcasing growth in confidence and understanding. By addressing both abstinence and safer sex strategies, the program met youth where they were developmentally and socially, helping them to make informed and empowered decisions about their health.

To measure learning outcomes, pre- and post-surveys were conducted, revealing marked improvement in participants’ understanding of sexual health concepts, comfort in discussing sensitive topics, and ability to make safe, informed choices. The results affirmed the effectiveness of small group engagement and culturally relevant approaches in increasing self-efficacy among youth.



Sexual Health and Empowerment Workshop (Agojie Training Camp)

The Agojie Training Camp was designed as both an empowerment workshop and a proof of concept for the broader Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health initiative funded by the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD). This was hosted by Own Your Ase in collaboration with RnD Associates, local educators, peer mentors, and community ambassadors, the curriculum was intentionally crafted to reflect the lived experiences of Baltimore’s young women. The workshop series featured two themed blocks. The first, Understanding Sexual Health & Building Healthy Relationships (July 29, 2025), focused on helping girls aged 13–18 explore healthy versus unhealthy relationships, communication, and consent through the “Red Flags and Green Flags” activity.



The afternoon session for young women aged 19–24 emphasized power dynamics, trust, and empowerment in adult relationships. The second block, Safer Sex, HIV Prevention, and Birth Control Choices (July 31, 2025), provided age-appropriate education on STI prevention, condom use, contraception, and HIV prevention tools like PrEP and PEP. Participants also took part in practical activities, including building personal wellness kits, condom demonstrations, and community resource exchanges that connected them to local clinics and support networks.



The camp achieved remarkable engagement and measurable outcomes. Over 90 percent of participants completed both workshop blocks, demonstrating strong interest in continued mentorship and future community ambassador roles. Pre- and post-session reflections revealed notable improvements in sexual health literacy, including increased understanding of PrEP and PEP, informed contraceptive decision-making, and greater awareness of healthy relationship boundaries. Participants expressed a heightened willingness to seek STI testing, initiate sexual health conversations with peers, and refer others to prevention services. By using culturally affirming language, storytelling, and peer-led facilitation, the sessions successfully reduced stigma, fostered open dialogue, and empowered young women to take ownership of their sexual health and wellbeing.

The Agojie Training Camp made a powerful impact by revealing critical gaps in sexual health knowledge among young participants while creating a safe and affirming space for open dialogue. Many attendees, particularly those aged 13 to 15, disclosed that they had already been in sexual relationships or knew peers who had, yet had never received comprehensive guidance on topics such as consent, boundaries, and HIV prevention. One participant shared, “No one talks to us about sex,” underscoring the lack of accessible and honest education for adolescents. Another expressed that she felt “safe” and “not judged,” confirming that the camp fostered trust and belonging.

These reflections demonstrate that the Agojie Training Camp not only equipped young people with vital knowledge but also empowered them to engage in open, judgment-free conversations about their health and well-being.



A major challenge encountered during the Agojie Training Camp was parental resistance to allowing participants to receive sexual health testing. Many parents believed their daughters were not sexually active, despite anonymous surveys showing that about 75% had engaged in sexual activity, revealing a critical disconnect that hinders comprehensive care. Another challenge emerged during the sacred circle sessions, where participants disclosed deeply personal experiences, including incidents of sexual assault.

For future sessions, we recommend hosting a parent orientation before the workshop series to build trust and shared understanding. This session should present data on youth sexual health, along with anonymized testimonials from participants to highlight the realities faced by adolescents. Including a Q&A with facilitators and health professionals would help address parental concerns, dispel myths, and emphasize the importance of early, honest sexual health education.



Marcus Garvey Community Health Event/Tent & Workshop facilitation

The Marcus Garvey Day Community Health Event, held on August 16, 2025, in the 600 Block of N. Gilmore Street, Baltimore, served as a powerful demonstration of how community-centered engagement can advance health equity and awareness around HIV prevention, PrEP, and PEP. Hosted by Own Your Ase in collaboration with RnD Associates, the event's theme - Empowerment, Wellness & Liberation for Black Families - reflected a deep commitment to integrating cultural pride with public health education. The event attracted families, youth, and community leaders for a full day of health promotion, artistic expression, and empowerment-driven conversations. Through this collaborative effort, RnD Associates' Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health initiative showcased how culturally grounded outreach can effectively bridge the gap between awareness and action in Baltimore's Black communities

Throughout the day, the Health & Wellness Pavilion remained a vibrant hub of engagement. The pavilion offered blood pressure screenings, holistic wellness resources, and comprehensive sexual health navigation, including education on HIV prevention, PrEP, and PEP. Health ambassadors distributed condoms, resource cards, and wellness kits while engaging attendees in meaningful conversations about healthy living and preventive care. A highlight of the event was the interactive sessions and conversations around PrEP, PEP and HIV, where peer educators and health navigators led an open dialogue addressing myths, fears, and questions about HIV prevention. This peer-led model, used curated family conversation cards and role-plays in facilitating the sessions and was able to make complex topics feel more approachable. This contributed in breaking down stigma and encouraging participants to consider PrEP and PEP as proactive steps toward protecting their health and their loved ones.



Mama Ngina’s session on “Healthy Relationships & Addressing Sexual Health in the Black Community,” delivered powerful insights into love, consent, and communication within families. Her message emphasized that addressing sexual health is not just a medical issue but also a cultural and relational one, requiring conversations grounded in respect, community, and self-worth.

An unexpected highlight came from a group of teenage Black boys and young men drawn to the dip bar outside the health tent, a creative strategy that transformed casual fitness engagement into an honest conversation about sexual health. One participant remarked, “You should start a TikTok channel to talk about this stuff, because people won’t come up to the table, but they’ll watch it at home on their phones,” emphasizing the need to meet youth where they are. This encounter showed how blending physical activity, culture, and technology can break taboos around discussing sex with teens and create safe, organic entry points for deeper health education.

The Health & Wellness Pavilion session was highly effective, with several elements contributing to its success. Small group discussions fostered open conversations about PrEP, PEP, and HIV awareness, while family conversation cards and role-play activities helped participants comfortably address sensitive topics. However, key challenges included the lack of on-site testing, the need for more male health navigators to better engage men, and limited staffing for a large turnout of over 200 participants. Despite these hurdles, the support of the Egbe Oya Rites women’s group, many of whom are health professionals proved invaluable, and future plans include expanding the team and ensuring all facilitators receive sexual health navigation training.

Black August Community Health & Wellness Event

The Black August Community Health & Wellness Event, held on August 23, 2025, at 3800 Greenmount Avenue, Baltimore, powerfully embodied the spirit of Healthy Relationships, Black Resistance, and Speaking Out Against Health Disparities and Social Injustice. Organized as part of RnD Associates’ Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health initiative, the event brought together community members, activists, and families for a day dedicated to health education, empowerment, and social awareness. The event opened with a rally and community walk, symbolizing unity and resilience while raising awareness about the ongoing health disparities affecting Black communities. This culturally grounded approach linked historical resistance movements with modern public health action, reinforcing the belief that collective health is a form of liberation.

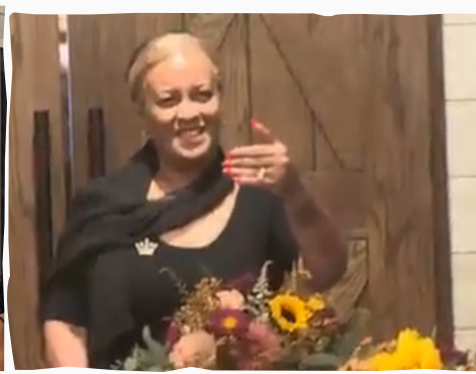




Throughout the day, the Health Tent and Screening Pavilion, in partnership with the Pride Center of Maryland, offered confidential HIV/STI testing, wellness checks, and vital health information. Health navigators from RnD Associates provided one-on-one counseling, answering questions about PrEP and PEP, and distributing sexual health kits and educational resources. This peer-based engagement model proved highly effective, creating a safe environment where community members could discuss HIV prevention openly—many for the first time. The steady flow of visitors underscored a growing community trust in RnD’s ambassadors, who continue to “meet people where they are” by bringing health services directly into neighborhoods, rather than relying on clinical settings that some residents find intimidating or inaccessible.

The event’s interactive components strengthened its impact by blending art, culture, and education. A community marketplace showcased local Black-owned businesses and wellness brands, while live spoken word and music performances celebrated Black resilience and health justice. The highlight of the day was the Sexual Health Workshop on Healthy Relationships, facilitated by Mama Ngina, which engaged attendees in discussions around consent, power dynamics, and the importance of PrEP/PEP in building safe and affirming relationships. These creative and conversational spaces fostered dialogue that extended beyond medical knowledge, encouraging participants to see sexual health as part of a broader journey toward empowerment, respect, and community healing.

The success of the Black August Health & Wellness Event highlighted the impact of the Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health program. By bringing PrEP and PEP education into trusted cultural spaces, RnD Associates successfully connected public health with community values. The event boosted awareness, strengthened partnerships with the Baltimore City Health Department, the Pride Center of Maryland, and local organizations, and built lasting trust.



Queens' Sisterhood Society Dinner: Elevating Women's Voices in Sexual Health and Empowerment



The Queens' Sisterhood Society Dinner, held as part of the Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health initiative, featured a compelling presentation led by Rebekha Atnafou, MPH, which explored the eight dimensions of health and wellness and how sexual health connects to emotional, physical, social, and financial well-being. The presentation emphasized that sexual health is not an isolated issue but an essential part of holistic wellness, impacting self-esteem, relationships, productivity, and even economic stability.



The session highlighted sobering statistics: Baltimore City ranks among the top cities in the U.S. for STD rates, and despite progress, significant racial disparities persist. Participants learned about the effectiveness of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) in preventing HIV, along with new prevention tools like DoxyPEP and the HPV vaccine, which also prevent certain cancers. These insights were coupled with an exploration of how sexual health directly influences financial and emotional stability, pointing out that untreated STIs and unplanned pregnancies can disrupt educational attainment and economic growth, particularly for women and families.



Through an interactive dialogue, attendees reflected on how personal choices and relationship dynamics shape overall wellness. The eight dimensions of health, viz., emotional, physical, social, spiritual, environmental, financial, occupational, and intellectual, were unpacked to show that healthy sexual relationships are foundational to achieving balance across all areas of life. The presentation also tackled the stigma around discussing sex and HIV prevention in women's circles, affirming that open, honest conversations are a form of resistance and empowerment. The evening's keynote reminded attendees that wellness goes beyond disease prevention to fostering joy, connection, and self-worth.



In closing, a call for stronger community-driven action through the Ambassadors to Promote Sexual Health program was done, which brings together barbers, beauticians, peer educators, and women's organizations, including the Queens' Sisterhood Society, to normalize conversations about sex and prevention across Baltimore. The presentation reinforced the belief that when women are informed and empowered, they influence entire communities. The dinner concluded with a renewed commitment from participants to integrate sexual health into broader wellness and financial empowerment initiatives, ensuring that every dimension of health is addressed with dignity, knowledge, and collective strength.

The Baltimore City HIV Commission/HPG Meeting



The AIDS Action Baltimore – HPG Meeting, held on September 18, 2025, at the Enoch Pratt Free Library (Southeast Branch), provided an opportunity for stakeholders to review and discuss the newly developed PrEP Public Service Announcement (PSA). The presentation of the two-minute video was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Participants expressed strong approval of its content, tone, and creative approach, with several stating, “I loved everything about it,” and “I applaud you.” The use of Baltimore-specific, non-copyrighted music was praised for its cultural relevance and appeal to younger audiences, and the incorporation of real community stories, enhanced by AI-generated visuals, was considered both innovative and authentic. Attendees also appreciated that the PSA effectively reflected Baltimore’s identity, with one comment noting, “I think it does depict Baltimore very well.”

Feedback on representation and diversity was particularly detailed. Participants appreciated that the video featured women of color prominently, helping to challenge the misconception that PrEP is only for men or same-gender-loving individuals. Comments such as, “I hear women tell me all the time, I didn’t know PrEP was for women, this was a great representation of that,” underscored this success. However, suggestions were made to broaden representation by including Asian, Caucasian, and Hispanic individuals to better mirror Baltimore’s real population and HIV demographics. The inclusion of “seasoned” individuals, those over 50, was praised as an important acknowledgment of older adults’ sexual health needs. It was also observed that the faith component of the PSA was particularly impactful for older and religious women reentering the dating scene, helping to destigmatize conversations about PrEP in more conservative communities.

Constructive feedback was provided regarding video length, messaging clarity, and language framing. While some attendees found the two-minute length acceptable for broadcast or event settings, others recommended that shorter versions (under 30 seconds) be developed for social media platforms like Instagram. The video’s rhythmic Baltimore beat was noted as an effective engagement tool for youth, though some participants found the rapid scene transitions and text difficult to read. On messaging, it was recommended that the PSA focus on personal empowerment and self-protection, rather than framing prevention in terms of a partner’s behavior. As one participant noted, “It’s about you and protecting yourself.” The narrative was commended for showing real-life scenarios, married individuals, single parents, young people, and older adults, illustrating that PrEP is for everyone, regardless of relationship status or background.



Consensus was reached on several next steps and action items. Plans were set to create shortened versions of the PSA tailored to different audiences, including clips for social media, waiting rooms, late-night TV, and movie theaters. Attendees expressed willingness to collaborate in identifying which segments resonate best with specific age groups. A discussion guide will be produced to facilitate the PSA’s use in educational and small-group settings, while local media partnerships will be explored to extend its reach. The Baltimore City Health Department clarified its role as a supportive partner in production—providing resources and enabling community-driven storytelling rather than serving as the direct messenger—to build greater trust and authenticity.

Partnership exploration with Dorcas and MAETAC

A Partnership Exploration Meeting was convened on August 27, 2025, between RnD Associates and Dorcas/Older Women Embracing Life (OWL), along with community health and research partners from Baltimore and greater Maryland. The purpose of the meeting was to explore collaborative opportunities aimed at strengthening HIV prevention, aging, and sexual health initiatives through community-led engagement. Updates were shared on ongoing projects under the Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) Aging Initiative Grant, which selected OWL as the community recipient. The initiative, funded through the Baltimore City Health Department and the Greater Baltimore HIV Planning Council, focuses on reducing isolation and stigma among adults aged 50 and above, especially lifetime survivors of HIV—through creative engagement, intergenerational connection, and stigma reduction. It was noted that surveys have already been completed among both providers and consumers, with the first year prioritizing the social needs of people 50+ living with HIV, and programming designed to include both women and men in intergenerational activities.



Strong emphasis was placed on collaborative partnerships and community integration, with RnD Associates recognized as a key partner in evaluation, education, and outreach. Other active collaborators were identified, including Morgan State University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Maryland, the Rites of Passage Initiative, Queen Sisterhood Society, Nolita Projects, Women's Wellness Lounge, Brothers Helping Brothers, and Voice of Africa. These partnerships were credited with advancing holistic programming across youth development, harm reduction, financial empowerment, and sexual health education. Cross-cutting work was highlighted for bridging communities such as returning citizens, youth, and older adults through storytelling, training, and mentorship.



The Ambassadors Program under RnD Associates was discussed as a cornerstone of authentic community engagement, with monthly meetings, virtual and in-person trainings, and a planned ambassador retreat scheduled to ensure continued capacity building and alignment of community outreach efforts.

Plans for upcoming programming were reviewed, with several joint activities in progress. Storytelling and community performances were described as vital engagement strategies for amplifying multigenerational voices. A follow-up performance was announced for Fall 2025, following the success of the May event, and additional storytelling training was being developed for Spring 2026. Outreach goals were outlined, including six sexual health education sessions, nine podcasts, and at least 100 PrEP referrals, alongside 100 HIV screenings and engagement of approximately 1,000 community members through partner networks. A pilot initiative introducing PrEP education and distribution in barbershops, university sites, and faith-based organizations was also announced. The meeting further identified needs for training and certification in PrEP navigation and mental health support, with recommendations to collaborate with Chase Clinic, AETC, and the Baltimore City Health Department for technical assistance and credentialing support.

Additional discussion centered on language considerations, documentation of lived experiences, and upcoming conferences. Partners expressed concern over evolving language restrictions in sexual health communication imposed by certain funders but reaffirmed their commitment to inclusive, comprehensive education. A legacy project, the "Fabulous Five" Documentary, which chronicles the lives of women living with HIV for over 21 years, was recognized as a model for intergenerational storytelling and historical preservation.

Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health in Black Churches: Advancing Community Health Through Faith-Based Partnerships



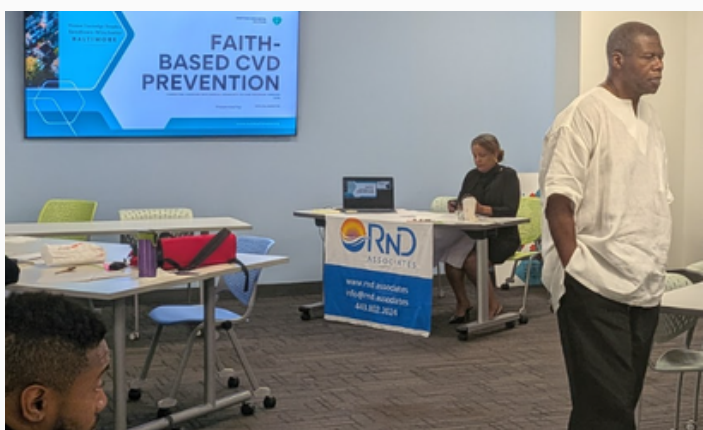
RnD Associates, in collaboration with the Ambassadors Initiative and with the support of the Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD), continues to make significant progress in addressing one of the most underserved areas of community health education. Through the "Symposium on Promoting Health, Relationships, and Reproductive Health in Black Churches," held on May 27, 2026, community leaders, clergy, public health professionals, and faith-based organizations came together to begin changing conversations that have historically been avoided within many Black faith communities. This symposium represents a major milestone in our effort to bridge the gap between faith and public health. For generations, discussions surrounding sexual and reproductive health have often been considered sensitive topics within churches, creating barriers to education, prevention, and access to care. By working alongside trusted faith leaders, RnD Associates is helping create safe spaces where evidence-based health information can be delivered in culturally appropriate and spiritually respectful ways.

The symposium featured presentations on the role of Black churches in health promotion, partnerships between healthcare providers and faith institutions, research on effective interventions, reproductive health across the lifespan, fatherhood engagement, women's leadership, and youth ministry as a platform for promoting healthy relationships and sexual health. The event concluded with action planning and evaluation, laying the groundwork for sustained community engagement.

This initiative reflects a bold and strategic investment in prevention. Rather than waiting for poor health outcomes to occur, RnD Associates and its partners are working upstream to equip churches with the knowledge and resources needed to address sexually transmitted infections, reproductive health disparities, relationship wellness, and family health from within the community itself.

The willingness of church leaders and congregations to participate demonstrates a growing recognition that faith institutions can play an essential role in reducing health inequities among Black populations. By engaging influential community voices, this work has the capacity to increase health literacy, reduce stigma, strengthen families, and improve access to preventive health services.

As we continue this work, we anticipate expanding educational programming, strengthening church-healthcare partnerships, developing community health ambassadors, and increasing referrals to preventive health services.



Voices from the community

[Check here to see more quotes](#)

Featured quotes

"The data connected to Syphilis was new for me. While I've worked in Public Health for a lengthy amount of time, there aren't a lot of answers or statical representation to give much insight on this."

Valentine's: Love, Relationships & Sexual Health - Existing: Jan-May 2026 - HIV/STI knowledge, Data and disparities

"I learned that a lot of married people should also get tested because of the rates of infidelity. I learned that Prep can be administered a few times a year via a shot. I think that's awesome."

Ambassadors meeting and podcast Sept 8 - Existing: Jul-Dec 2025 - PrEP/PEP awareness, Testing motivation, Data and disparities

"I learned that no matter what the need of the community is there are resources and everyone can take advantage of especially like the resources that were prevented at this symposium"

Black Church - New: PSH in Black Churches - Ambassador model

"I learned that we need to be more mindful of how we teach our teenagers about sexual awareness and teenage pregnancy and we need to be more inclusive and more understanding of what their needs and emotions are and we need to keep the communication lines open"

Sexual Awareness Training - Existing: Jan-May 2026 - Prevention behaviors

"Emphasis on repeated points of contacts build a relationship and confidence & trust with our stakeholders. Stigma is a barrier to using mobile STI testing vans"

BCHD site visit meeting - Existing: Jul-Dec 2025

HIV/STI knowledge

Healthy relationships

Testing motivation

"strategies to strengthen partnerships w/churches to integrate health promotion and services; Christianity and sex and relationships"

Promoting Health in Black Churches - New: PSH in Black Churches

"Learned that PEP can be taken with in 72 hours of untreated sex and that only a low rate of seniors use condoms."

Workshop Series with QSS - Existing: Jul-Dec 2025

PrEP/PEP awareness

Prevention behaviors

"you can use prep before having sex to prevent contracting HIV and that all of the dimensions of wellness is connected to a healthy sexual relationship"

Workshop Series with QSS - Existing: Jul-Dec 2025

PrEP/PEP awareness

HIV/STI knowledge

Healthy relationships

"I learned a lot of people in a marriage have similar problems with sexual health as others that aren't married"

Ambassadors meeting and podcast Sept 8 - Existing: Jul-Dec 2025

Healthy relationships

"Pregnancy rates are lower but STI rate continue to grow"

Parent Sex Education Information Session - Existing: Jul-Dec 2025

HIV/STI knowledge

Prevention behaviors

Data and disparities

"I learned that parents of teens do not inquire about STDs."

Workshop Series with QSS - Existing: Jul-Dec 2025

HIV/STI knowledge

The Ambassadors 1

RnD Associates is a community-based public health research and implementation organization distinguished by its **Ambassadorial Model**, a core feature of how programs are designed and delivered. Over five years, this model has guided culturally grounded, cost-conscious approaches across reproductive and sexual health, HIV prevention including PrEP and PEP, STI prevention, and cancer prevention. The model centers community trust, practical delivery, and real-world relevance, enabling consistent reach and sustained engagement across diverse populations.

Nolita Project

Youth Development & Leadership, Youth Diversion Program and Returning Citizen Program

www.nolitaproject.org
thenolitaprojectinc@gmail.com

Nolita Project focuses on youth in underserved communities, especially teens and young adults exposed to trauma, violence, or instability. We also have a returning citizen and youth diversion program. Their work makes sexual health conversations feel relevant and empowering for young people navigating real-life challenges.

Each1Save1 works with returning citizens, court-involved youth, and families affected by violence. They bring sexual health education into spaces that are usually not reached - reentry programs, mentoring groups, and youth empowerment workshops.

Each1Save1

Mentoring, Returning Citizens, Violence Prevention

www.each1save1md.com
each1save1@yahoo.com

Queens Sisterhood Society (QSS)

Women Empowerment

www.weareqss.com
info@weareqss.com

Queens Sisterhood Society provides healing and growth spaces for women through community dinners, sister circles, and empowerment workshops. They create environments where women feel safe discussing sexual health, relationships, emotional wellness, and PrEP/PEP.

Own Your Ase blends African-centered rites of passage practices with health education, self-identity, and empowerment. They engage adolescent girls and young women through workshops that explore culture, self-worth, sexual responsibility, and emotional healing.

Own Your Ase

Rites of Passage & Cultural Healing

www.ownyourase.com
ownyourase@gmail.com

For My Kidz

Youth Development, Harm Reduction & Returning Citizens

www.formykidzbaltimore.org
info@formykidzbaltimore.org

For My Kidz serves youth and parents, including those impacted by community trauma, substance use, and incarceration. They bring sexual health conversations to families as a unit, not just individuals. Their strength is family-centered engagement.

RnD Associates Ambassadors are trained community representatives who translate public health priorities into action. They lead peer education, support outreach, share lived experience, and connect individuals to services. Through this network, RnD Associates ensures programs are delivered by trusted voices, in familiar settings, and with accountability to the communities served.

The Ambassadors 2

Brothers Helping Brothers

Apex Holistic Wellness -
Returning Citizens &
Men's Health

HelpingBrothers410@gmail.com

This ambassador focuses on supporting men, especially those formerly incarcerated or reentering society. They remove shame and fear around sexual health conversations and help men access PrEP/PEP and STI testing discreetly.

More Than a Shop is a coalition of barbers and beauticians across Baltimore who use their shops as hubs for community education. They engage people in everyday conversations about health, relationships, and PrEP making sexual health education feel natural, relatable, and stigma-free.

More Than a Shop

Barbers & Beauticians
Network

MoreThanAShop.com
info@morethanashop.com

Women's Wellness Lounge

Wellness, Safe Spaces
& PrEP Education

womenswellnesslounge@gmail.com

The Women's Wellness Lounge is dedicated to nurturing women's emotional well-being, restoration, and intentional self-care. Our approach weaves sexual and reproductive health into a holistic wellness framework, creating safe spaces for open dialogue about pleasure, boundaries, consent, and informed, empowered choices that support whole-woman wellness.

Brand New Now Press is the home of Michelle Petties' transformative work at the intersection of food, emotion, culture, trauma, healing, and storytelling. Through her books, workshops, retreats, coaching, public talks, and community partnerships, Michelle helps people uncover the memories and beliefs that shape their beliefs about food, body, and self. In addition to this core work, Michelle brings her deep expertise in behavior change and mindset coaching to her role with RnD Associates, where she helps individuals overcome the fear and emotional barriers that prevent them from seeking sexual health services and PrEP/PEP.

Brand New Now Press

<https://michellepetties.com/>
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God is Here Media

www.godisheremedia.com
ciera@godisheremedia.com

God is Here Media is dedicated to creating media that fosters healing and enhances social and public health outcomes through the power of faith and various forms of storytelling and communication. Our target areas are Sexual Health, Disease Prevention, ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), and Literacy.

Promotes the work of the Ambassadors through print and mass media coverage.

The Voice of Africa

Media Power House

Thevoiceofafrica.com
kadmielv@gmail.com

Morgan State University

Dr. Robin Butler
Robin.Butler@morgan.edu
morgan.edu/schp

[Dr. Ray Winbush and rwinbush@usit.net](mailto:Dr.Ray.Winbush@usit.net)
Institute for Urban Research

Promotes healthy relationships and sexual health promotion through MSU campus activities and engages public health students in practicum with the Ambassadors project and provides space at MSU for the Ambassadors and HPRC project activities.



Sensitization & Awareness Services provided

- PrEP Services
- PEP Services
- HIV Sensitization Services
- HPV Sensitization Services
- Syphilis Sensitization Services
- Other STIs
- Condom Use Awareness
- Contraception Awareness
- Sexual Health
- Healthy Relationship

Incorporating the eight (8) dimensions of wellness in our campaign

- Intellectual dimension
- Emotional dimension
- Occupational dimension
- Environmental dimension
- Spiritual dimension
- Financial dimension
- Physical dimension
- Social dimension

**1957
reached**

Reached and provided awareness to

- 130% PreP

Diverse Population we have reached

- Adolescents and youth in underserved communities
- Young adults navigating social and economic instability, including college-age youth, justice-impacted young adults, and those transitioning into adulthood.
- Returning citizens and formerly incarcerated individuals
- Men's health populations
- Women and girls across life stages
- Families and caregivers impacted by trauma, including parents, caregivers, and family units affected by incarceration, substance use, and community stress.
- LGBTQ+ community
- Black and Brown communities disproportionately affected by HIV and STIs
- Community members reached through everyday settings including barbershops, beauty salons, and other informal, non-clinical spaces.
- Faith-Based Communities.
- Individuals affected by trauma, stigma, and emotional barriers including people impacted by adverse childhood experiences, body image concerns, relationship challenges, and fear or shame related to care-seeking

Our Team



Rebkha Atnafou, MPH
CEO



Dr. Samuel Onwubiko
Research & BD



Ciera Daniel
Media



Jimmy Wasihun
Data



Shameeka Jelenewicz
Program Evaluation



Carla Williamson
Finance



Valencia Warnock King
Accounts

Events

- Monthly BeMoreUnfiltered: Let's Talk About Sex Podcast;
- Monthly healthy relationships and sexuality trainings;
- Youth leadership and sexual health conference in June/July;
- Couples Retreat;
- Women's Retreat;
- Men's Retreat;
- Training for Faith Leaders;
- Training for Returning Citizens;
- Training for Parents;
- Training for Youth and Youth Service Professionals
- Storytelling Performance (May)

For more information, please access

- The [**Digital Version**](#) of this report
- The [**Evaluation Dashboard**](#)
- Event [**Picture Gallery**](#)
- Our [**Events Calendar Here**](#)
- Our [**YouTube Channel Here**](#)
- Our [**LinkedIn Page Here**](#)

If you would like us to do a training for you or your stakeholders, please contact us



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