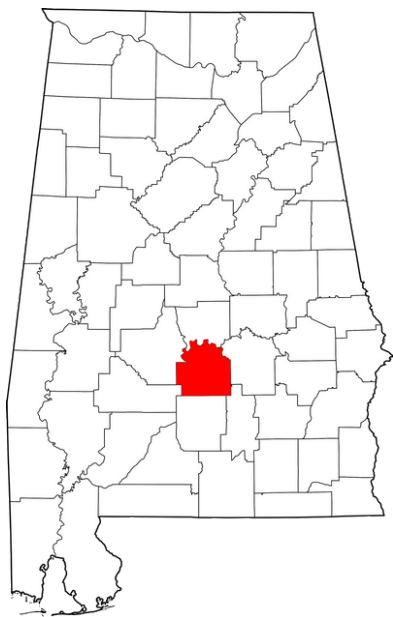




AIDS Coalition of Alabama Project (ACAP)

# IT TAKES A VILLAGE



**Working to Improve  
Sexual Education  
(WISE) in**

**LOWNDES COUNTY,  
ALABAMA**

**REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**

Founding Agency: AframSouth, Inc.  
Funded by the Elton John Foundation

# AIDS COALITION OF ALABAMA PROJECT (ACAP)

Founding Member- AframSouth, Inc.

Since 2008, AframSouth has developed programs to meet their mission: to foster and encourage the strengthening of African American families by addressing social and health inequalities. One of our major focus areas has been HIV/AIDS in the Deep South. In 2012, AframSouth, Inc. held an initial planning meeting with a few interested persons from invited agencies such as Southern AIDS Coalition, AIDS in Minorities and RP White Consultants in order to discuss the lack of current organizations, strategies to increase funding to existing organizations, and the development of new organizations.

In 2014, AframSouth hired ReaShanda White as a consultant to organize its first Capacity Building Meeting held June 13, 2014 in Montgomery, Alabama. This meeting brought together 20 persons of diverse backgrounds including faith based leaders, service providers, organizations and three HIV/AIDS consumers to begin discussing pertinent HIV/AIDS issues affecting African Americans in Alabama. The AIDS Coalition of Alabama Project (ACAP) was formed later that year to continue planning and implementing AframSouth's original mission. Along with persons living with HIV, the six organizations which make up the Coalition include: AframSouth, Inc. (Montgomery), Selma Air (Selma), Alabama State University Center for Leadership and Public Policy, CLP-ASU (Montgomery), Aletheia House (Birmingham), Central Alabama AIDS Resource & Advocacy Center, CAARAC (Wetumpka), Community Faith Partners (Huntsville).

## **WRITTEN, EDITED, AND DESIGNED BY:**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*by Pamela Payne Foster, MD, MPH  
Principal Investigator- Project WISE*



Over the thirty plus years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the face of the epidemic has changed from a mostly white gay male who live in large urban cities on the East and West Coasts to a predominately Black disease in men and women including those who live in the Deep South. In fact, rural Alabama has been hit disproportionately by the HIV epidemic. Lowndes County Alabama represents this changing demographic.

In order to prevent new cases of HIV, a critical look at how our youth receive sexual education in order to decrease their risk for getting and transmitting HIV is needed. Several states have comprehensive sexual education strategies while Alabama does not. In order to address this issue, the **AIDS Coalition of Alabama Project (ACAP)** wrote and received funding from the Elton John Foundation to use community-based participatory methodology in order to first assess community resources for sexual education to youth in the community as well as identify gaps and community solutions. The project "Working to Improve Sexual Education" or Project WISE was started in December 2015. This proposal started with key data collection, the formation of a Community Advisory Board, and two key meetings with the final summary of this community process in this Final Report.

We are proud of the work that we accomplished with this community effort and look forward to continued collaborative efforts to decrease the number of persons who live in Lowndes County who are living or affected by HIV/AIDS.

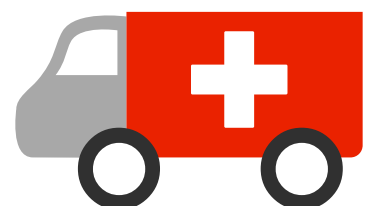
Remembering that "it takes a village" and continuing to work together, there is nothing that we can't achieve!



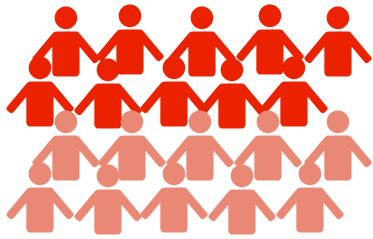
# THE METHODOLOGY

In April of 2016, a diverse group of residents from Lowndes County, Alabama started the WISE deliberative process to frame sexual health education for youth ages 13-24. Central to the process was how the community could better invest in providing effective and efficient sexual education to the youth of Lowndes County in order to reduce sexually transmitted diseases/infections, specifically HIV. At the first meeting, the group received an introduction to the HIV epidemic in their community, what the charge was for the group and some preliminary data on what the laws are and model programs. Additionally, the group brainstormed sites where sexual education occurred in the community as well as preliminary gaps and solutions.

In June 2016, several other CAB members were recruited to a second meeting where participants received a final assessment of current sexual health activities (data collected via in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, school board, politicians, etc.) and participants gave final recommendations around gaps and solutions for providing sexual education to youth in their community. This report is based on the intensive analysis of pre/post questionnaires, recorded notes, and program evaluations from these series of meetings.



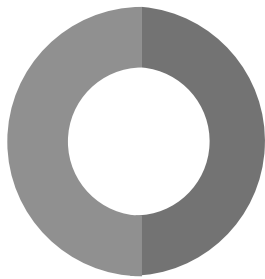
# ALABAMA



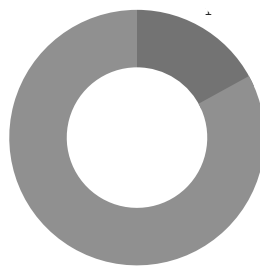
# HIGH RISK BEHAVIORS

\*As a result of high risk behaviors such as unprotected sex and substance abuse, adolescents are at a high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

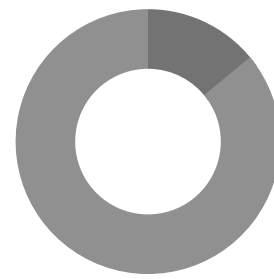
About **HALF** of teens in Alabama are having sex. However,



**50%** did not use a condom during their last sexual intercourse



**17%** have had sex with four or more partners



**14%** did not use any method to prevent pregnancy

\*According to the 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

# SEX EDUCATION STATS

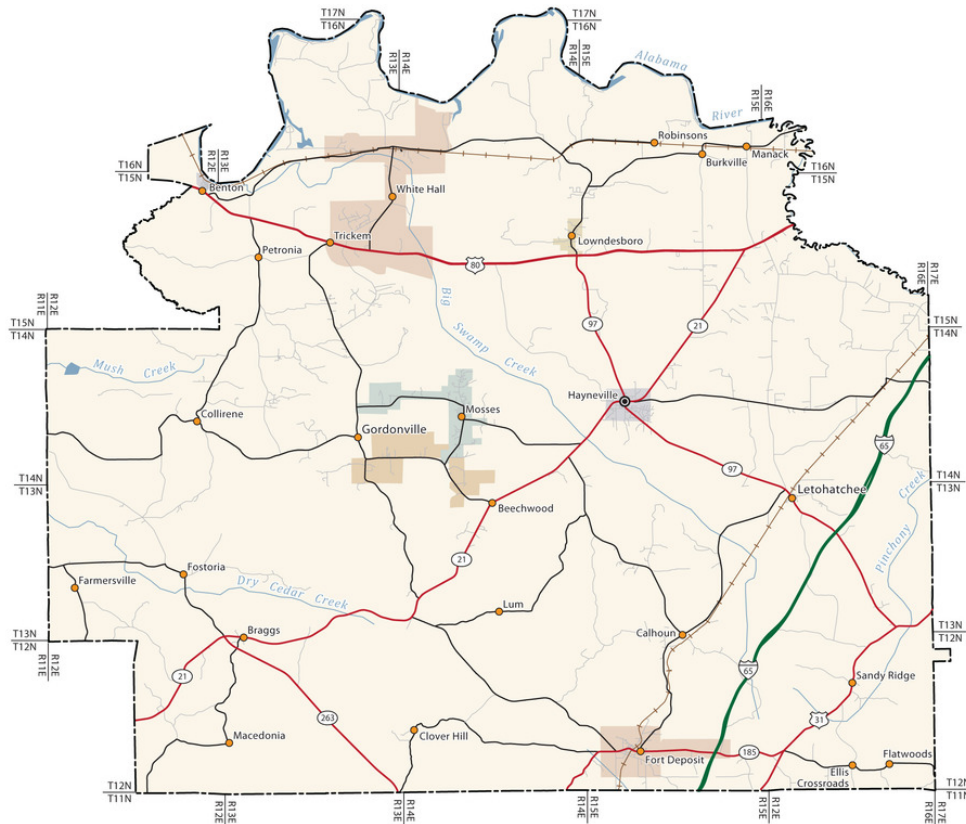
**1 9 7 5**

Alabama established Code 16-40A-2 to address minimum contents to be included in sex education programs and curriculum through health education classes

**1 9 8 7**

The State Board of Education adopted the Alabama Course of Study which continues to mandate minimum "student outcomes" but not a particular curriculum for grades 7 to 12. The minimum objectives heavily emphasize abstinence, moral, and lifestyle issues which may not be adequate for decreasing risk behaviors of STIs and HIV in adolescents (CITE).

# LOWNDES COUNTY, AL



Cartographic Research Lab, College of Arts and Sciences  
The University of Alabama

## DEMOGRAPHICS & STATISTICS

During three of the past five years, Lowndes County has had the largest incidence rate of HIV/AIDS in the state. Additionally, the pregnancy rate for girls and women 10 to 19 years of age was higher (37.8/1000 live births) than the state average (24.2/1000 live births) (Alabama Department of Public Health, 2015).

# The Alabama Coalition on AIDS **THREE-PHASE** **FRAMEWORK**

Central to our deliberative process was the use of Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) which uses a community engaged approach to prompt and guide the process.

Additionally, throughout the process, ACAP members provided facilitation in a three phase framework listed below to identify areas of a baseline assessment for current sexual education activities, and then to identify gaps and potential solutions in order to improve sexual education to youth ages 13-24 in the county.



## **ASSESSMENT P H A S E**

This phase of the project set the important groundwork for gathering materials and conducting interviews with key stakeholders on what sexual activities were being conducted and where. Careful consideration of who should be on the CAB and making sure that a diverse and empowered group of community leaders were selected was key. During this phase, it was suggested that more youth who are affected by HIV should be selected, so adjustments were made and more youth were added to the CAB for the second meeting.



## **IMPLEMENTATION P H A S E**

This phase of the project continued the education of the community on key issues while allowing adequate deliberation in order for the CAB to identify gaps and final recommendations for the solutions. Additionally, interviews with key stakeholders were completed during this phase.



## **DISSEMINATION P H A S E**

Also key to a CBPR approach is to keep community members informed of all aspects of the project. This phase is being implemented through the publishing and dissemination of this report to the CAB and larger Lowndes County community.



# FRAMEWORK FINDINGS

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF CAB PARTICIPANTS

7 male / 25 female

TOTAL: 32

11 Students

21 Adults

Occupations:

- 3 parents
- 2 elected officials
- 1 Health Care Provider
- 3 ministers
- 4 teachers
- 1 government worker
- 4 non-profit workers

## LOCATIONS OF HIV AND SEXUAL EDUCATION IN LOWNDES COUNTY FOR YOUTH\*

- Schools - Health classes in middle and high school
- After School Programs & Non-Profits - Gift of Life
- Faith Based - New Salem Christian Church, Hayneville

\*As reported by the CAB



# ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENTS

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In 2015, Selma AIR presented HIV Education to three schools in Lowndes county:

## **CALHOUN HIGH SCHOOL**

Grades 9-12, Received 4 presentations

## **CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL**

Grades 9-12, Received 8 presentations

## **LOWNDES MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Grades 6-8, Received 4 presentations

\*Grades 1-5 did not receive HIV education by Selma AIR.

**“I hope to share information  
within the community to  
make the people more  
knowledgeable.”**  
-CAB Member

# EMERGING GAPS

1 So few local physicians and health care providers in county for partnerships

2 Substance abuse and addiction services not linked with health/sexual education and STI prevention

3 Lack of informed community leaders on types and effectiveness of sexual education/curriculum currently used in the county for high risk youth such as those in foster care

4 Lack of Pastoral and Church Support

5 Lack of Sexual Education Strategies for Parents on how to engage their children

6 Lack of visibility of AIDS Service Organizations and Health Department in the Community as well as confidentiality issues

7 Lack of support for high risk youth such as those in foster care

8 Gaps in underlying causes that lead to HIV, ie. Depression, Counseling

9 Lack of sexual education for elementary-aged students



# SOLUTIONS

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- More Creative Approaches by the Church and Community such as partnering with foster care organizations and substance abuse and addiction organizations (ie. Lighthouse Counseling, Council on Substance Abuse- Montgomery)
- Consider partnerships with health care providers in nearby counties for support
- Developing programs that address underlying issues of contracting HIV, (low self-esteem, depression, etc.)
- Strategies aimed at engaging parents in order to engage youth (i.e. Head Start, PTAs)
- Possibly consider the use of Telehealth partnerships to begin offering sexual education programs to other venues outside of clinics
- More strategic support from the Health Department and AIDS Service Organizations
- More peer education/ prevention strategies- (ie. Teens and Pastors)
- Better education of community leaders around sexual education issues within the county's youth
- Consider age-appropriate sexual education for elementary-aged students
- Consider the addition of sexual education curriculum in school to other classes outside of health education (i.e., science, life skills, etc.)
- Strategies on increasing standardized sexual education and STI prevention in the school curriculum





# A STORY OF COLLABORATION

At the same time that Project WISE was being developed, another coalition was developed to address some of the same goals as WISE: to decrease the high rates of HIV in the County. The coalition was called “Getting to Zero” and was led by Dr. Laurie Dill and Dr. Barbara Owens of the Montgomery AIDS Outreach. As we began our planning, the leadership of the Coalition attended our meetings and received permission from our Community Advisory Board to use it as the CAB for the subsequent project.

The sharing of resources, planning and implementation between the two projects working in the same area serves as a testament to how community partnering can be utilized to build community capacity for a common cause!

**I expect to get involved  
with more outreach to the  
community, talking to  
parents and children.**

**-CAB Member**

# QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

## COMMUNITY NEEDS OF LOWNDES COUNTY

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) members were tasked with identifying HIV/AIDS related needs for Lowndes County. These needs fell into five general categories and represent the CAB's increased understanding of the issues and interest in working on change. They are: (in order of response frequency):

- 1) Awareness/Education
- 2) Community Involvement
- 3) Intervention
- 4) Parental Involvement
- 5) Need for increased HIV testing

## MOVING FORWARD

In line with the growing integration and interest in applying the knowledge gained from these CAB sessions, members are looking to:

- 1) Do more testing for HIV/AIDS
- 2) Seek knowledge about how to protect community members (self/partner/children) from acquiring HIV/AIDS
- 3) Look for more outlets for testing so that they can put their new knowledge to use

These suggestions for future directions align perfectly with the mission of Project WISE and also validate that this initial implementation of Project WISE has been highly successful.

# CAB ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESULTS

## APRIL & JUNE (AVERAGES):

Please rate the following statement:

As a result of today's meeting, I understand what I am expected to do as a member of the CAB.

Response	Number	%
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Agree	9	27.5
Strongly Agree	31	72.5
Total	40	100

## APRIL & JUNE (AVERAGES):

Please rate the following statements:

(1= Not at all, 2= Somewhat, 3= A good bit, 4= Completely)

Response	Number	Mean
To what extent do you feel like the meeting was useful?	30	3.82
To what extent do you have a better understanding of the needs of Lowndes County regarding HIV/AIDS?	30	3.72
To what extent do you feel prepared to serve in the role of a CAB member?	30	3.6

## APRIL SESSION ONLY (ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK SURVEY RESULTS):

(The following scale ranges from 1= Poor to 5= Excellent)

Response	Number	Mean
Increased my knowledge of HIV/AIDS	11	4.83
Increased my knowledge of HIV/AIDS in Lowndes County area	11	5
Increased my knowledge of the Alabama State Department of Education - Sexual Education Laws	11	4.67
My overall rating of the meeting	11	4.92



# THANK YOU ALL

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our Community Advisory Board and our ACAP partners, for their dedication and the gift of their time to collect data, organize the meetings, and produce this report. Project WISE would not be possible without their wholehearted willingness to engage community members on issues of public concern, and to work towards solutions together. Lastly, we would like to thank our funder, the Elton John Foundation for without their financial support, Project WISE would not be possible.



# COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS (CAB)

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Dr. Marcie Bates  
Councilwoman Jacquelyn Boone  
DeAndre Crowell  
Jamil Dawson  
Evangelist Mae Gaffney  
Jaleigha Gary  
Jaylan Gary  
Eddie Glover  
Earnest Green  
Mayor Walter Hill  
Jasmine Jackson  
Samita Jeter  
Tauria Loakley  
Katanga Mants  
Yamir Mants  
David McCloud

Franklin Nettles  
Dr. Margarite Owens  
Wendale Pierson  
Amelia Purifoy  
LaQuonda Purifoy  
Ja'Leel Russell  
Roslyn Simmons  
Natya Simmons  
Minister Emmitt Smith  
Megan Smith  
Mya Smith  
Sharon Smith  
Pastor Willie Smith  
Jacynthia Spann  
Patricia Stiles  
Chasity Talley  
Kristie Tyson  
Rachel Waters  
Rev. Macehalle Watt  
Cynthia Wilson

## ACAP MEMBERS

---

AframSouth:

Dr. Pamela Payne Foster  
William Foster  
ReShanda White

Selma AIR:

Mel Prince  
Cedric Wherry

CLP-ASU: Professor Jerry Henderson

CAARAC: Shakita Jones

Community Faith Partners: Wendi Williams

Alethia House: Gloria Howard

## ACAP EVALUATORS

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,UAB School of Public Health:

Dr. Lisle Hites

UAB School of Public Health:

Dr. Matt Fifolt,

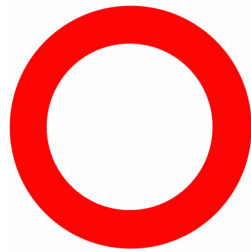
**"I want to eliminate AIDS in Lowndes County."  
-CAB Member**

**CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION.**



**[www.aframsouth.net](http://www.aframsouth.net)**

# ALABAMA COALITION ON AIDS



## PARTNERS

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AframSouth, Inc. (Montgomery), Selma Air (Selma), Alabama State University Center for Leadership and Public Policy (Montgomery), Alethia House (Birmingham), Central Alabama AIDS Resource & Advocacy Center, CAARAC (Wetumpka), Community Faith Partners (Huntsville),

