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**FOR RELEASE: Thursday, May 26, 2005, 10:30 AM Eastern**

*Editor's Note: The following research will be released at the Society for Prevention Research ([www.preventionresearch.org](http://www.preventionresearch.org)) 2005 annual meeting, May 25-27, 2005, Washington, DC.*

## **PREVENTING DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE AMONG MINORITY TEENS**

*New prevention programs studied*

- What works to prevent depression and suicide among African-American and Latino youth?
- Can teaching parents better discipline practices help prevent depression among African American teenagers?
- What is the potential for integrating suicide-prevention programs into African-American churches?

Depression is a significant health problem for teenagers – about seven percent of teens are affected by the disease, which often persists into adulthood. While depression rates are historically lower among both African American and Latino youth, the suicide rate among black teens is increasing and suicide is the third leading cause of death for African-American youth. Latino teenagers are more likely to plan and carry out suicide than their white or black peers.

While the impact of anti-depressant medication on teenagers has been under scrutiny, little is known about how to prevent depression in young people. Most studies have focused on Caucasian children. In addition, African Americans are less likely to seek out traditional mental-health services, leading some researchers to suggest that programs in non-traditional settings may be most effective.

Several researchers who have studied programs and strategies for preventing depression and suicide among minority youth will present their findings at the Society of Prevention Research's annual meeting in Washington, DC, May 25-27, 2005.

One group of researchers believe that children who are doing better academically and who are not disruptive in school may be more likely to get positive reinforcement and therefore less likely to fall into depression. They followed two programs that targeted helping parents and teachers to minimize children's aggressive or disruptive behavior and improve academic readiness and tested African-American children's moods over time.

Another group of researchers will present the results of applying a common prevention program on low-income Latino and African-American youth in the sixth grade. A researcher from George Washington University will explain why suicide-prevention programs aimed at African-American youth may be more successful if put into the context of African-American churches.

*Sources: Sharon Lambert PhD, Sherry Molock, PhD, George Washington University; Nicholas S. Ialongo, PhD, Johns Hopkins University; Esteban Cardemil PhD, Clark University.*