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$2M Awarded to 4 Groups to Boost HIV Services for Transgender Clients

CDC funding to the four health centers aims to improve HIV care as well as services for mental health and substance use disorders.

July 22, 2022 By Trent Straube

Four community health centers were awarded a total of $2 million in federal funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to improve HIV services for their transgender clients and provide them with needed care for mental health issues and substance use disorders.

According to an announcement on HIV.gov, the four recipients are:

- St. John's Community Health in Los Angeles
- Care Resource Community Health Center in Miami
- Callen-Lorde Community Health Center in New York City
- Whitman-Walker Health in Washington, DC

These four clinics will use the funding to develop programs to increase the number of trans people who start and stay on PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), the daily pills and long-acting injections that prevent HIV, and to encourage viral suppression and adherence to meds among their trans clients living with HIV. And because a disproportionate number of transgender people experience unmet needs regarding mental illness and substance use disorders, the funding will also help these clinics provide services to address these issues.

Once the new programs are implemented, the clinics will share best practices and insights with other clinics through a learning collaborative.

The CDC announcement explains the importance of directing HIV funding to services that target the transgender community, writing:

> Transgender persons, especially transgender women, have a high lifetime risk of acquiring HIV. Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino transgender women have the highest prevalence of HIV among transgender persons. These are among the reasons that the National

HIV/AIDS Strategy designates transgender women as a priority population. Focusing efforts by federal agencies and nonfederal stakeholders on transgender women and the other four priority populations will reduce the HIV-related disparities they experience, which is essential if the nation is to succeed on the path toward ending the HIV epidemic by 2030.

Further, despite the disproportionate burden of HIV among transgender women, receipt of HIV prevention and care services has been suboptimal for this population, according to the CDC. Among transgender persons, 92% reported that they were aware of PrEP, but only 32% have used it. In 2019, viral suppression among persons with diagnosed HIV was 67% among transgender women. In addition, many transgender persons experience homelessness, poverty, and substance use disorder, with many transgender women also reporting verbal or physical abuse and suicidal ideation and behavior. All these factors impact access to and utilization of HIV prevention and care services. This demonstration project aims to improve care services, help eliminate health disparities among transgender persons, and advance health equity.

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy, recently updated for 2022–2025, aims to reduce new HIV infections in the country by 75% by 2025 and by 90% by 2030 through a series of objectives and strategies. To learn more, see "What's New in the Updated National HIV/AIDS Strategy?"

For more details about HIV and trans people, see the POZ Basics on HIV and Transgender People and the article "National Transgender HIV Testing Awareness Day 2022." For a collection of recent news items, click #Transgender.

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