

MICROGRANTS REPORTS FROM THE FIELD



Washington State Department of Health Office of Infectious Disease

Fall 2018

Stigma Reduction

HIV Stigma and discrimination is complex. Researchers, organizations, communities, and individuals often have different definitions and priorities. Reducing stigma requires a recognition of that complexity as well as the interrelation of homophobia, transphobia, racism, and sexism. Maximizing limited resources requires acknowledging differing levels of expertise and an agreement to designate specific areas of focus for different entities. Stigma reduction microgrants one strategy to support community initiated and community specific work.

Community Engagement

End AIDS Washington calls upon us to invigorate and strengthen meaningful engagement of communities disproportionately impacted by HIV-related health disparities and stigma. Genuinely collaborative processes are challenging but worthwhile. There are no easy, quick solutions. Recognizing this, the Office of Infectious Disease provides microgrants to HIV Community Services partners to develop innovative community engagement projects.

U=U

“People living with HIV continue to live with the stigma that they are infectious and possibly harmful to their partners. This new evidence (U=U) is critical to changing public perception of HIV transmissibility”

*- John Wiesman,
Washington’s Secretary
of Health.*



The Big Queer Talent Show

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Using Performance Art to Engage Community

Gay City hosted our Mosaic Project. We produced three nights of performance, followed by audience-performer Talk-Backs that center a population of People at High Risk and People Living with HIV—Queer and Trans Sex Workers who have experienced homelessness.

During the last 30 minutes of each performance we hosted a professionally facilitated audience-performer Talk Back in which we explored the issues raised during the performance. Among those issues were stigma around HIV, gender identity, homelessness, economic barriers, racism, transphobia, trauma, violence, access to healthcare, and more. One night of the performance was ASL interpreted for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The capacity of our venue is 50 seats. Two of the nights were standing room only, and we hosted a total of 130 community members. We were thrilled with the level of community participation in these events.

Queer & Trans Sex Workers Share Stigma Experiences

Queer and Trans Sex Workers who have experienced homelessness face significant stigma and criminalization that has put them at increased risk of HIV. During the Talk Back, there were accounts of people choosing not to access shelters or medical care due to an expectation of harassment.

There was personal testimony about the impact of stigma and the barriers to accessing care and help. At each performance, we had a table of materials to help folks access organizations and resources, as well as lively, community-building post show discussion.

The discussion itself was a time in which performers and audience members alike were able to connect with one another and resources. Given that this is a population Gay City has not formerly hosted before, we are pleased to now be known as a place that is safe for Queer and Trans Sex Workers who have experienced homelessness, and anticipate an increase in attendance of this population in our Wellness Center.

Successes

The information was well received.

The data presented was well shared after the summit.

Every leader expressed the need of getting more information to create more awareness to their community.

Kenyan community leaders committed to lead as a role model in stigma reduction efforts and to support people with HIV and enhance access to HIV prevention, treatment and support.

Challenges

Making future events like these include everyone in the community.

The Kenyan community is diverse and consists of many groups divided in tribes or religious affiliation.

HIV information materials in different languages.

Training is needed for leaders on HIV and other chronic diseases like cancer etc.

Underlying social-economic and structural issues continue to fuel health disparities among black and African born communities.

Sustaining the commitment of religious leaders to continue being engaged and to prioritize HIV in their work.



Kenyan Spiritual Leaders Health & Wellness Summit

Partnering with Faith Communities

Center for Multicultural Health partnered with key religious and community leaders from Kenyan communities in South King County and organized a summit on Health and Wellness. One goal of the project was to engage the community leaders to start a community discussion on HIV and stigma in the Kenyan community. Another was to support the leaders in developing community solutions to reduce HIV stigma and address issues of racism and health disparities. 40 spiritual and community leaders attended the summit and are interested in pursuing future discussions to develop plans on how to inform their communities on the importance of getting tested and access to early treatment.

Future steps are:

- Training opportunities for leaders that teach strategies to engage the larger community on how to combat stigma
- More health and wellness screening events in different community settings.
- Educate the community in the importance of community based testing and inform community how to navigate the health system which can be complicated with most newly or recent immigrants.

CMCH plans to initiate a dialogue between people living with HIV and religious/community leaders to utilize the power of personal stories in calling to people to actions to reduce HIV related stigma. We will continue engaging religious leaders as ambassadors to empower their members to overcome self and societal stigma and to get involved in influencing policies and services provision to meet needs of their communities.



Vanderbilt Student Group

Partnerships with Academia

On March 5 and March 7, 2018, 11 students from Vanderbilt University's Alternative Spring Break worked with PCAF to create an Anti-Stigma Video Series. On March 5, the students spent time with PCAF's prevention staff learning about HIV, HIV transmission, PCAF's services, and common myths related to HIV. They also had conversations about the social constructs that can create barriers to HIV diagnosis and treatment. On March 7, the students separated into three groups to collect video footage of people's thoughts on HIV at the Tacoma Transit Center, Ruston Way waterfront, and UW Tacoma.

The videos focused on people's current understanding of HIV, the perceptions they had of people living with HIV, and ways they thought it could be transmitted. The students then shared facts about what HIV looks like in our community and provided facts on HIV transmission. The students captured the participants' reactions and responses to learning more about HIV.

PCAF is currently working with a video editor to bring these videos together in a meaningful way that we can use on our social media and digital platforms. We anticipate having final versions of the video series soon. The video editor is also creating a motion graphic template that will be used to brand PCAF's ongoing videos in the anti-stigma campaign over the long term. The micro-grant enabled PCAF to invest in equipment to collect quality video footage for this project and beyond.



Downtown



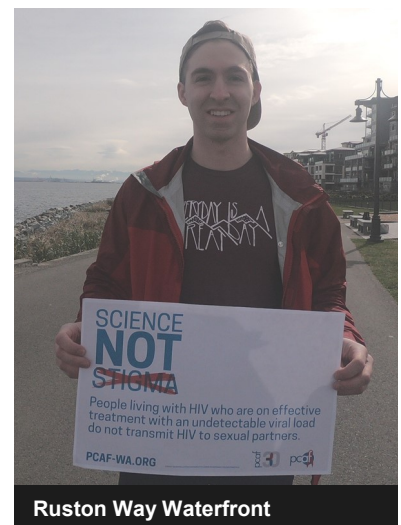
UW Tacoma

U = U

The Department of Health announced it has joined the HIV prevention campaign [Undetectable=Untransmittable](#), also known as U=U.

U=U describes the scientific findings that people living with HIV, who have undetectable levels of HIV in their blood for at least six months, have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV to their partners. Because treatment keeps these people from transmitting the virus, the concept is known as treatment as prevention.

Washington is the sixth state health department to join the campaign along with 18 other state and local health departments, and more than 700 organizations from 90 countries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institutes of Health endorse the science behind U=U.



Ruston Way Waterfront

Successes

Emotional and honest conversations on-stage about queer adolescence

Sharing information about sexual health topics—U=U, HIV testing, PrEP

Youth got to watch their idol perform as well as meet BenDeLaCreme (youth were thrilled by this experience)

LGBTQ youth-serving organizations tabled and shared on-stage about their services

Large number of attendees

Challenges

Booking drag queens from RuPaul's Drag Race is logistically challenging, but ultimately worth it to reach a wider number of youth.



The Big Queer Talent Show

The Big Queer Talent Show

The Big Queer Talent Show - an inspiring event that brought together many parts of the LGBTQ community to enjoy thrilling performances and discuss the highs and lows of queer adolescence. Some of the themes discussed with the performers included finding queer community, using art as an outlet to overcome trauma, living authentically in the face of stigma and sexual health in the MSM community. One performer spoke in depth about their HIV positive status, and we discussed PrEP and U=U onstage. There were over 200 attendees—most of which were young queer folks under the age of 24. We have been receiving really positive feedback from the community and have high hopes to do this event again in the future.

This event informed stigma work by showcasing the power of sharing stories amongst disenfranchised groups. The effectiveness of the event came from the raw and authentic interviews that happened on-stage after the performances. Normalizing the queer struggle worked to de-stigmatized a lot of sexual, mental, and social health issues specific to the LGBTQ community. Youth felt connected to the performers who they idolized and inspired to be their best queer selves.



For persons with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711).

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