

Evaluation of SFAF's Magnet Program

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Project Description

In this project, funded as a community collaborative by the California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP), CAPS and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF) seek to evaluate Magnet, a clinic and community center located in the Castro District of San Francisco, the City's primary gay and lesbian neighborhood. The primary study will consist of a large survey of gay men in San Francisco. Data from the work will enable us to examine the characteristics of men in the city who use Magnet and other sexual health services, and to determine if their use of Magnet is associated with HIV risk reduction practices (like condom use). In addition, we will conduct a preliminary study involving qualitative interviews with gay men. The interviews will allow us to explore the facilitators and barriers of using sexual health services, and to develop a comprehensive list of all such resources available in the Bay Area. This work will ensure that the main study's survey fully covers the types and organization of resources available to gay men.

Magnet offers sexual health services out of a storefront facility located in the heart of San Francisco's Castro District. But it is also more than just a clinic. The center is intended to empower men with the information, skills, and confidence they need to make informed decisions during sex. The founders of Magnet placed it in an inviting location in the heart of the Castro in the hopes that would encourage men to think and talk about sexual health. Magnet has become very popular, with 4600 clients in 2007 alone. But it is unknown to what degree Magnet is influencing decisions about safer sex and other HIV prevention practices among men in the local community, a gap this study aims to fill.

Significance

Recent data have shown that almost half of all Americans living with HIV are MSM. In California, MSM make up nearly three-quarters of all HIV/AIDS cases and, in San Francisco, are 85% of all cases. Studies also have shown that substantial numbers of MSM engage in behaviors that can transmit HIV. In some cases, men may not be using condoms because they are serosorting (choosing sexual partners that they believe have the same HIV status as them). Although such strategies may help prevent HIV transmission to some degree, the number of new infections each year is still so high that approximately 25% of MSM in San Francisco are HIV-positive. As such, it is urgent that we identify new, culturally-appropriate means of enhancing prevention norms among gay men in the city.

Project Recruitment Dates: Anticipated for October 1, 2010 to December 31, 2011

Project End Date: July 31, 2012