Lead by Example

Carl Sciortino helms AIDS Action of Massachusetts.

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As a state congressman for nearly a decade, Carl Sciortino honed a lot of the skills he'll need as the new executive director of AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts. But another aspect makes him uniquely qualified: He's HIV positive. "It's critical to have people living with the virus at the table," he says. "It really is our lives and our health and our future at stake. If we were only talking about preventing new infections, we wouldn't be having honest conversations about ending the epidemic." For similar reasons, he's also open about being gay. "I know many men who take pride in being gay but are terrified to tell their closest friends and family members they have HIV," he says. "That's something worth exploring."

Sciortino arrives as AIDS Action is merging with Fenway Health, which provides medical care for Boston's LGBT community. (Both organizations will retain their separate brand identities.) It's a common trend in today's streamlined AIDS landscape: Groups that provide strong advocacy and support services such as housing and HIV testing join up with a medical care facility. Now, for example, folks who test positive at an AIDS Action program can be directly linked to Fenway's health care team. "These partnerships can be important," Sciortino says. "It's a great opportunity to show what's possible for ending the epidemic."

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