HIV Prevention and Justice for All

May 6, 2009 By James Wortman

The HIV Prevention Justice Alliance (HIV PJA), a new nationwide network, will launch its membership drive June 1. Three organizations created HIV JPA—the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP), the AIDS Foundation of Chicago and the Atlanta-based AIDS and reproductive services organization SisterLove. The new network consists of individuals and organizations advocating for an approach to HIV prevention that is inclusive of the social, racial and economic factors that fuel the spread of the virus.

“Our goal is to build a unified and effective social movement for HIV prevention rooted in human rights,” said CHAMP founding executive director and senior consultant Julie Davids.

In addition to addressing HIV from a social perspective, the HIV PJA aims to rally support for HIV research that better serves at-risk communities—including research that benefits prisoners, women, men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgendered people of all races. The alliance will also promote coordination between federal and state efforts to form a comprehensive national AIDS strategy, which President Barack Obama has pledged to implement.

“Obviously, as the White house starts to sketch out its process for moving forward on developing a national AIDS strategy, we believe it’s going to be important for all of us to be at the table articulating this vision and bringing together different stakeholders in the different at-risk populations and sectors that we interact with,” said David Munar, vice president of policy and communications for the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. “We want to keep this narrow and focused, to fill the gaps and not duplicate other allied efforts.”

The HIV PJA grew out of CHAMP’s Prevention Justice Mobilization. That effort united hundreds of like-minded individuals and groups in 2007 to advocate specifically for HIV prevention policies, including additional funding for universal access to sex education and harm reduction services, efforts to combat the social disparities that fuel HIV transmission, and research into programming and tools that help suppress HIV/AIDS misinformation.

Under the slogan “Because HIV/AIDS is not just a disease; it’s proof positive of injustice,” the HIV PJA has transformed that initial campaign into an ongoing mission. The group took its first public action in February 2009 by sending an open letter to the co-chairs of the 2009 National HIV Prevention Conference (NHPC) and urging for cross-government participation in the conference,

which will be held August 23 through 26 in Atlanta. The letter was endorsed by 223 organizations from 39 states; Washington, DC; Puerto Rico; and the Virgin Islands.

On June 1, the HIV JPA will start a broad call for membership. However, groups and individuals who sign up before that date will be recognized as founding members of the alliance. Membership fees are based on a sliding scale, but organizations that cannot afford dues can request partial scholarships. Visit CHAMP's website for more information.

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