Community Collaboration Cuts HIV

13,000 gay and bi Black and Latino men received PrEP care through collaboratives.

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An interesting thing happened when public health departments and clinicians listened to Black and Latino communities about how to roll out pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP): HIV rates went down.

These are the results from seven cities that participated in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's THRIVE program, including Birmingham, Alabama; Washington, DC; and New Orleans. The five-year program formed community collaboratives between Black and Latino community groups, public health departments and health providers to craft and roll out PrEP programs for Black and Latino people.

The program also paid for increased HIV testing; PrEP screening, counseling, education and navigation services; services to help people stay on PrEP if they wanted to; and training for local providers on how to prescribe the HIV prevention pill.

Through THRIVE, a total of 9,494 Black and 3,528 Latino gay and bisexual men received PrEP. Between 2014 and 2018, HIV diagnoses among Black same-gender-loving men were 4.2% lower than they were for similar men in jurisdictions that qualified for THRIVE but didn't receive funding.

For Latino gay and bi men, HIV diagnoses rose 1.7% in THRIVE-eligible but unfunded jurisdictions. But in the THRIVE jurisdictions, diagnoses dropped by 2.7%.

While lots of things could have contributed to the drops in HIV cases, the program seems to have had a beneficial effect, noted CDC researcher Kashif Iqbal, MPH. "Barriers still exist," he said, "and highlight the need to better engage with the Hispanic community and the African-American community to identify better ways to engage these populations."

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