



Gay Harm Reduction Advocate Michael Siever Dies at 74

Michael Siever, PhD, cofounded the Stonewall Project, a harm reduction program that supports LGBTQ folks with substance use issues.

April 24, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

Michael Siever, PhD, a passionate [HIV](#) and [AIDS](#) activist, [harm reduction](#) advocate and psychologist, died April 10 at an assisted living facility in Seattle. He was 74.

Siever, who was gay, dedicated his life to serving the LGBTQ community in San Francisco through [mental health](#), [substance use](#) and HIV health services.

As director of behavioral health at the San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF), he cofounded the Stonewall Project more than 25 years ago. The harm reduction program helps gay and bisexual men with substance use issues.

Siever had been living with bone marrow cancer for several years, according to the [Bay Area Reporter](#). His adopted son, Ethan Treber, said he helped care for Siever throughout the last few years. Last month, Siever decided that he was “done with transfusions.”

“We at San Francisco AIDS Foundation are saddened to hear of the passing of Dr. Siever,” Tyler TerMeer, PhD, the CEO of SFAF, told the Bay Area Reporter. “Michael was an incredible champion for the queer community—dedicating his life and career to building programs and services for gay, bi and trans men who have sex with men and others at risk for HIV.

“His deep expertise, and care, in crafting these services lives on today through two programs at SFAF he cofounded more than 20 years ago: the Stonewall Project, which provides substance use treatment and counseling, and Magnet, our sexual health clinic at Strut. Michael’s legacy lives on, and we are so grateful for his contributions to our community,” TerMeer continued.



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Siever cofounded Magnet with Steve Gibson, who described Siever as always trying to get to “yes.”

“Michael was a visionary,” Gibson said. “The way he saw gay men relative to methamphetamine and enabling gay men’s health beyond the paradigm of HIV positive or HIV negative. Michael and I had a vision to change that.”

In 2014, Siever retired from SFAF, but his work did not end.

In fact, that same year, Siever was co-investigator for a study that highlighted the positive impact of the Stonewall Project on HIV and AIDS prevention.

The study showed that Stonewall Project participants decreased their use of stimulants, such as methamphetamine, and reduced their sexual risk behavior.

“We showed Stonewall can address stimulant use, a key barrier to HIV prevention and care, without insisting on abstinence. Our program, which is based on a willingness to work with clients regardless of their ability and/or willingness to stop using and teach them better ways to take care of themselves and improve their lives, has been borne out by these findings,” Siever said in a [University of San Francisco news release](#) on the study.

Laura Thomas, MPP, MPH, the director of harm reduction policy at SFAF, also paid tribute to Siever.

“Michael was a fierce advocate for harm reduction and for people who use drugs,” Thomas said. “He was the first board chair for the San Francisco Drug Users Union and a leader in the movement for supervised consumption services. He was a nationally known expert on gay men and methamphetamine.”

“He had a big heart and a wicked sense of humor and brought a sense of joy to everything he did,” Thomas added. “I think he would be so outraged at how San Francisco is backing away from all of the evidence-based HIV prevention and harm reduction work that he helped to build, including Stonewall and the Drug Users Union.”

In addition to being a staunch community advocate, Siever was known as a fierce friend.

“He was such a mensch,” said Scott Pando, a longtime friend. “He was an absolute love and a dear, dear friend of mine.”

Born April 29, 1950, Siever graduated from Harvard University and the University of Washington in Seattle. He authored several articles regarding mental health and substance use treatment among the LGBTQ community, including a chapter in *Gay and Lesbian Mental Health: A Sourcebook for Practitioners*.

A celebration of Siever’s life will likely be held in San Francisco at a later date, Treber said.