HIV and COVID-19

Here is how AIDS service organizations are responding to COVID-19.

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Since they first formed in response to the AIDS pandemic in the ’80s and ’90s, AIDS service organizations (ASOs) and HIV support groups have proved to be as resilient as the people living with HIV whom they serve.

With the COVID-19 pandemic now threatening the lives of the already vulnerable among us—seniors, people of color and people with compromised immune systems as well as individuals at the intersection of these communities—these ASOs have been quick to innovate. This has meant combining HIV and COVID-19 prevention messages to clever effect, reminding members of particularly stigmatized communities of their rights as they navigate the coronavirus crisis and sometimes simply offering people with HIV a forum for pouring out their heightened feelings of anxiety and survivor’s guilt during this destabilizing moment in our history.

Other examples include the Desert AIDS Project, which converted a new clinic into a COVID-19 triage center, and an HIV doc who returned to performing ER duties to serve a growing need.

By continuing to fight against HIV while tackling the coronavirus, HIV/AIDS groups show us that they are here for us no matter how novel or daunting the health care challenge.

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