After Nearly 30 Years, This San Francisco Group Ends Its HIV Programs

Westside Community Services provided home care and case management, notably for the city's Black residents with HIV.

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Westside Community Services, which has provided HIV services in San Francisco since 1988, has decided to terminate its HIV programs effective at the end of August, reports SF Weekly.

"The decision to close these programs did not come easily for the Westside Board of Directors," CEO Mary Ann Jones, PhD, said in a memo obtained by SF Weekly. The memo also indicated that it had become increasingly difficult for Westside to continue to operate the programs because of insufficient funding.

The organization runs two HIV services. Its AIDS home care program serves hundreds of clients in the later stages of their illness, allowing them to maintain quality of life, and its AIDS case management program offers medical and social care to those living with HIV.

"Many [clients] have lost partners, friends, and family during the early years of the pandemic," wrote staff members in a letter to the board asking them to retain the programs. "For them, what will become of the links we all have patiently forged for crucial services? More importantly, what will become of our clients? There is no doubt that a number of them may be put at risk for homelessness."

What's more, Westside's services heavily impact the African-American community, which is disproportionately affected by HIV. According to the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, African Americans are 6 percent of the city's population but make up 17 percent of new HIV infections.

Although Westside will continue to provide mental health and family services, many folks are wondering what will happen to the hundreds of people living with HIV in San Francisco who use its programs.

Click here to read about how new HIV diagnoses in San Francisco have dropped to an all-time low, and click here to read about the city's National AIDS Memorial Grove.

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