

CHANGE for Women

A Trauma-Informed Model of Care for Women Living with HIV

IN THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN HIV MEDICAL CARE HAS INCREASED BY 14% SINCE THE PROGRAM'S IMPLEMENTATION



Background

The stages of HIV care, also known as the HIV care continuum, demonstrate significant gaps in HIV services, and efforts are underway at the federal, state, and local levels to develop and implement strategies to improve health outcomes for people living with HIV (PLWH). The HIV care continuum can be described by the following sequential steps: (1) diagnosis of HIV infection, (2) linkage to care, (3) retention in care, (4) receipt of antiretroviral therapy (ART), and (5) achievement of viral suppression (a very low level of HIV in the body). In the United States, there are 1.2 million people living with HIV, and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 30% had achieved viral suppression, which means that only 3 out of 10 people living with HIV had the virus under control. Viral suppression results in significantly improved health outcomes as well as dramatically decreased likelihood of HIV transmission (96% reduced risk of sexual transmission). The challenge of linking and retaining people living with HIV in care and treatment can be demonstrated by CDC data, which reveals that 14% of PLWH remain undiagnosed, and of those diagnosed, only 40% receive and stay in regular HIV medical care.¹ Successful retention in medical care is defined as one medical visit during each six month period of a 24-month interval, spaced more than 60 days apart, and this medical visit frequency improves survival, and allows people to be as healthy as possible.² Thus, the need to improve along the HIV care continuum plays a critical role in both care and prevention.



What Are We Doing?

The Coordinated HIV Assistance and Navigation for Growth and Empowerment (CHANGE) for Women program is a trauma-informed and gender-responsive bio/psycho/social model that aims to comprehensively and systematically address the known intersecting structural barriers to retention in HIV care faced by women living with HIV. CHANGE for Women utilizes a unique model of trauma-informed and gender-responsive methods of care to ensure that barriers to care, including mental health conditions, substance use, history of trauma, low health literacy, and lack of support services, can be addressed to ensure retention in care.

Through the CHANGE for Women program, Christie's Place has developed a partnership of San Diego organizations that functions as a network of care model to improve timely entry, access to and retention in care for women of color living with HIV in San Diego County. This highly successful program improves the utilization of medical care and treatment as well as strengthens

UNIQUE FEATURES OF CHANGE FOR WOMEN

- ▶ Mobile- and home-based peer navigation services provided by women living with HIV who have personal experience in navigating the care system, and therefore are able to **successfully gain the trust** of clients needed for acceptance of services;
- ▶ Assist women with **individualized** healthcare plans;
- ▶ Assist clients with **care coordination** and communication amongst providers; and
- ▶ Assist clients with health system and **social service navigation**.

the healthcare and social services systems through strategic alliances and the implementation of a wrap-around service model. CHANGE for Women is an innovative, evidence-based approach that is grounded in recognition of the structural, provider and individual-level barriers that women living with HIV face.

¹ "HIV/AIDS Care Continuum." AIDS.gov. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 6 Mar. 2015. Web. 11 May 2015.

² "HAB HIV Performance Measures." Health Resources and Services Administration. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Nov. 2013. Web. 11 May 2015.

Initial Trends of CHANGE for Women

The CHANGE for Women service delivery model has been successful in assisting clients with health system and social service navigation. Data from the County of San Diego documents that CHANGE for Women has improved access to and retention in care for women living with HIV, and locally women's engagement in HIV medical care has increased by 14% since the program's implementation.

Intervention Costs

CHANGE for Women has also demonstrated that it is a cost-saving intervention through a cost analysis study conducted in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. Findings show that

CLIENT STORY

"Yvonne" was first connected to CHANGE for Women in 2012 by the San Diego County Health and Human Services Department. She had recently tested positive for HIV, had a dual-diagnosis of bipolar disorder and substance dependence, and had multiple serious health issues, including Hepatitis C. She lived in an abusive independent living home and felt so hopeless that she believed that she was destined to stay there until she died from the abuse or her poor health. Yvonne was connected to a Peer Navigator, Case Manager, and enrolled in HIV care at Christie's Place. At first, Yvonne's hopelessness was so pervasive that she couldn't see the point of attending her medical visits or taking her medications. The treatment team worked closely with her to educate and support her, and eventually she began to feel hopeful about her life and started to be adherent to her HIV medication. However, it was apparent that Yvonne's mental health and substance use were severely impacting her quality of life and threatening her ability to remain in care. Yvonne's Peer Navigator and Case Manager offered alcohol and drug treatment, but she dismissed this idea. In the fall of 2013, after nights on the streets due to attempts to escape the ongoing abuse, Yvonne reached out to her Peer Navigator and told her she was ready to access treatment. Her Peer Navigator then played an instrumental role in connecting her to a treatment facility that would support Yvonne in her HIV, psychiatric, and other healthcare needs. Since entering treatment, she has remained in close contact with her CHANGE for Women Retention in Care treatment team and is retained in care. She has recently graduated the first stage of her alcohol and drug treatment program and is currently engaged in aftercare, including regular visits with a therapist and psychiatrist. Yvonne's viral load is now undetectable, the overall goal of antiretroviral therapy, and she has expressed that she is dreaming about her future. She has realized that she truly can live well with HIV.*

*Yvonne is a pseudonym for a client at Christie's Place

less than one (0.82) HIV infection needs to be averted through programmatic interventions in order for CHANGE for Women to be considered a cost-saving intervention.

What We Want You To Know

Christie's Place's extraordinary achievements in protecting and promoting public health and our significant experience in implementing and managing programs designed to improve access to and retention in care has been recognized not only locally, but nationally. Christie's Place has received the following honors:

- ▶ 2010 County of San Diego Public Health Champion Award
- ▶ 2010 City of San Diego Special Commendation for Human Relations
- ▶ 2011 Kaiser Permanente HIV/AIDS National Diversity Award
- ▶ 2013 UCLA/Johnson & Johnson Community Health Improvement Program Award

Agency Overview

Christie's Place, a women-led, nationally recognized agency, delivers comprehensive services closely linked to healthcare for women, children and families impacted by co-morbid health conditions, such as mental health and HIV, facing health disparities based on gender, race/ethnicity and socio-economic factors (e.g. extreme poverty, inadequate access to healthcare, sub-standard housing/homelessness, limited education and language barriers). For 19 years, Christie's Place has filled a critical need for gender-responsive, family-centered, culturally and linguistically competent services that address the unique needs of chronically ill women, empowering them to take charge of their health and wellness. Christie's Place's proven effective model includes services such as: behavioral health services; support center with resource coordination; information and linkages; medical case management; childcare; family casework; peer support; patient navigation; outreach; and basic survival needs assistance. Christie's Place is the only organization in San Diego County dedicated to serving women, children and families impacted by HIV/AIDS. What started as a small grassroots organization has grown into a comprehensive behavioral health and social service organization which receives 20,522 visits annually and serves 1,200 clients. Highly regarded for our design and implementation of evidence-based, innovative strategies and culturally competent services, Christie's Place is uniquely qualified to manage innovative programs designed to improve access to health care for San Diego's poor and vulnerable populations.



PROGRAM CONTACT

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