

Summer 2006

The logo for the Transitions Project features the word "Transitions" in a multi-colored font (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) with a red arrow pointing right from the top of the letter 'T'. Below it, the word "Project" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Transitions Project

*The **Transitions Project** would like to introduce your agency to our work! This newsletter will be published bi-annually and will cover some of the most important healthcare and HIV prevention issues facing transgender communities.*

ADAPTING EFFECTIVE HIV PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR YOUR TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

The *Transitions Project* is the only organization in the country that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) fund specifically to provide technical assistance to organizations working with transgender populations. One of the primary goals of the *Transitions Project* team is to assist community-based organizations (CBOs) in the adaptation and tailoring of three Effective Behavioral Interventions (EBIs) for transgender populations.

Specifically, the Transitions Project will help implement adaptations of three EBIs: *Mpowerment*, *SISTA* and *Healthy Relationships*. These interventions have been shown to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in specific populations, although none of the original research focused upon transgender populations. Our project provides capacity building assistance (CBA) in tailoring these interventions based on the known needs and particular circumstances of the transgender population that a CBO serves.

Per the CDC guidelines, each intervention is organized under the following subcategories:

- Description
- Core Elements, Key Characteristics, and Procedures
- Adapting
- Resource Requirements
- Recruitment

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Intervention components, per CDC guidelines cont'd:

- Policies and Standards
- Quality Assurance
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Key Articles and Resources
- References

When adapting an intervention, the key characteristics may be changed but not the core elements of the model. Core elements stem from the behavioral theory upon which an intervention is based and are therefore crucial to its effectiveness.

Before adapting the intervention, however, the *Transitions Project* team will help the CBO client conduct a formative evaluation, or needs assessment, of its target transgender population or populations. A thorough needs assessment allows for a more complete understanding of the specific population and enables more effective and culturally competent modifications. Such an assessment should include:

- Interviews with stakeholders and gatekeepers
- Focus groups
- A logic model
- Pretest of intervention materials

The *Transitions Project* looks forward to the challenges that the adaptation processes pose. We have been communicating nationwide with CBOs that have already implemented EBIs for their transgender client base and have learned about potential pitfalls as well as successes. Please contact the *Transitions Project* with any inquiries or interests in implementing an EBI for the transgender community that you serve or believe you could be serving.

TIPS FOR PROVIDERS

One simple suggestion for better serving transgender clients is the use of a more inclusive intake form. A form with options for gender and gender expression besides the usual male/female options affirms the presence of transgender consumers and also raises the awareness of non-transgender consumers.

Example: FtM (female to male) transgender
 MtF (male to female) transgender

One of the reasons for the necessity of additional options is that many transgender people have suffered from years of transphobia. Transphobia that stems from society at large, family, landlords, employers and, yes, even healthcare providers, has left many transgender people reluctant to seek necessary medical treatment and more importantly, preventive medical care.

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Some transgender people live their lives as “stealth” (that is, undetected and not explicitly “out” as transgender) which makes it difficult to reveal to a complete stranger (even a doctor) during their initial visit that they are transgender, especially when their transgender history has very little or nothing to do with their medical appointment. Having additional options regarding gender identity on an intake form eases this initial phase.

Transgender patients are well aware that in order to receive the best services it is important that their primary care doctor be aware of their complete medical history as well as their gender assigned at birth. The gender they were assigned at birth typically does not reflect how they may feel or perceive themselves. For example, an FtM patient may live most of his life as a man but may still need gynecological examinations. At best, this is a delicate topic. If the client has the option to check FtM (or whatever is appropriate) in the designated gender box, the health care provider can proceed with the consultation in a sensitive and more respectful manner without being intrusive. Moreover, the patient can attain a comfort level and a sense of safety that encourages ongoing treatment. All transgender people have a right to sensitive and competent healthcare services. Using an inclusive intake form is an important first step in serving your transgender clients well.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING UPDATE

In March, the *Transitions Project* conducted its first skills training in cultural competency for effective service delivery to transgender clients. Forty-five Bay Area service providers attended our one-day workshop. Topics covered include language and evolving terms, social issues and HIV risks particular to transgender populations. The final session addressed SISTA and Mpowerment and the ways that these interventions might be helpful for reducing HIV/AIDS in transgender communities.

The *Transitions Project* team plans to host another one day training this fall in a major U.S. city to be determined. We will post this training on www.effectiveinterventions.org as well as on our own website, www.caps.ucsf.edu/transitions, which is currently under construction. Stay tuned!

FAREWELL TO JAE SEVELIUS, PROJECT DIRECTOR

The *Transitions Project* bade farewell to our Project Director, Jae Sevelius, on June 9. The *Transitions Project* team wants to acknowledge and thank Jae for all her hard work and leadership. Her vision led to the creation of this project, and we hope to continue to fulfill that vision as she moves to a research-based position at UCSF. Thanks and good luck, Jae!

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