AIDS Community Outreach to Special Populations

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Background/Introduction

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) collaborates with rural, underserved, and minority communities to improve access to health information. Outreach efforts to special populations include (but are not limited to) NLM database training, providing Internet access, acquisition of computer equipment, and Web site development. NLM offers competitive awards to community-based organizations and libraries through the AIDS Community Information Outreach Program. This program offers funding to design and conduct projects that will improve access to HIV/AIDS-related health information for patients, the affected community, and their caregivers. NLM also cosponsors the Arctic Health and American Indian Health Web sites, which provide health information for and about American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Barriers

NLM recognizes the many barriers that affect the availability and accessibility of HIV/AIDS information, such as the lack of:

- Computer stations with Internet access in community settings.
- Privacy.
- Computer skills.
- Relevant and appropriate sites for special populations.
- Qualitative, authoritative, and accurate information on the Internet.

Breaking Down the Barriers: AIDS Community Information Outreach Program

NLM offers funding for communities to design and conduct projects with the following goals:

- Promote improved access to HIV/AIDS information for health care providers, patients, the affected community, caregivers, and the general public.
- Encourage partnerships and community-focused activities.
- Promote awareness and use of technology applications for improved information access.

Funding can help improve areas such as:

- Information retrieval
- Skills development
- State-of-the-art resources
- Resource development
- Document access

Types of organizations and consortia include:

- Public libraries
- Community-based organizations or patient advocacy groups
- Health departments or other local, municipal, or state agencies
- Faith-based organizations
- Partnerships among the above-mentioned organizations.

Case Studies

The following projects were conducted within Alaska and serve as models for adaptation and use by other Native American and rural communities.

Alaska Native Health Information Association (Alaska)

Four A's Resource Library Expansion (Anchorage, AK) http://www.alaskahealth.org

Type of organization

Community

Scope

Created a well-stocked and updated HIV/AIDS resource library that is accessible to clients, family members, staff and the community through the purchase of up-to-date books, journals, and other publications.

Results

The Four A’s Library Expansion Project allowed the resource library to catalogue existing library resources and purchase over 40 books, journals, and publications containing current information about HIV/AIDS. Accessibility to and organization of library resources were further enhanced by the purchase of new shelving and magazine file. The Four A’s supported the library’s opening and expansion of the resource library to local schools, colleges, doctors’ offices, and other agencies that partner with HIV/AIDS services. A complete list of resources is available on the Four A’s Web site.


Type of organization:

Community Healthcare, Clinic

Scope

Improve education and information access to quality HIV/AIDS information and establish an online community for Alaska Native residents. The project includes:

- Informational site with message board and links to credible HIV/AIDS Web resources
- Community support network
- Web-based CD for use by clients without Internet access
- Database of area HIV/AIDS service providers and resource centers

Results

Community Drum is the first HIV/AIDS Web site that is specifically written for the Alaska Native patient population and includes interviews, poems, and the cultural traditions of storytelling by Alaska Natives living with HIV/AIDS. The project created an online community for HIV/AIDS consumers. Indicators that the project was successful included additional requests for HIV/AIDS information, interviews, stories, and poems. The site uses traditional language, graphics, and stories to discuss patient family and community communications. Computers were purchased for client access and development of the Web site.

NLM Web Resources

American Indian Health Web Site

http://www.indianhealthservices.gov

Gateway to health information for and about American Indians

Arctic Health Web Site

http://www.arctichealth.org

Information portal for Arctic region inhabitants, with a focus on Alaska

AIDSInfo Web Site

http://aidsinfo.nih.gov

Information on HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention, and research from the federal government

NLM AIDS Web Site

http://aidsinfo.nih.gov

Access to federal and nonfederal sites on AIDS research, diagnostic treatment, control, and prevention