

STOP HIV/AIDS Update

"Seek and Treat for Optimal Prevention of HIV/AIDS"

No. 1, June 2010



What:

STOP HIV/AIDS is a pilot project to expand HIV testing, treatment, and support services to clinically eligible individuals in British Columbia. Hon. Kevin Falcon, Minister of Health Services, announced the program on February 4, 2010. The initial four-year pilot phase will be supported through a \$48-million funding commitment by the Government of British Columbia to Vancouver Coastal Health, Northern Health, the Provincial Health Services Authority, Providence Health Care, and the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS.

Where:

STOP HIV/AIDS will launch in a pilot phase based in Vancouver's inner city and Prince George. These regions have been identified as priority sites for the pilot project, as they represent a majority of British Columbia's HIV cases and display increasing rates of HIV/AIDS.

When:

The pilot project will operate as a four-year initiative from 2010 to 2013.

Who:

STOP HIV/AIDS aims to increase treatment for all clinically eligible individuals who wish to access care. The pilot project will specifically serve individuals facing multiple barriers to care in Vancouver's inner city and Prince George. These barriers include addiction, mental health issues, homelessness, and other social or environmental factors.

Why:

Although highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) has transformed HIV infection into a chronic, manageable condition for many of those who engage in care, this life-saving treatment remains under-utilized in British Columbia. Research from the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS has shown that nearly 40% of those who died of HIV-related causes in BC between 1997 and 2005 never accessed HAART. HAART can also be a powerful tool for HIV prevention. By suppressing the virus to undetectable levels in appropriately treated individuals, HAART decreases the probability of HIV transmission and helps curb new infections.

Project Goals

- Ensure timely access to high-quality and safe HIV/AIDS care and treatment
- Reduce the number of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses
- Reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS through effective screening and early detection
- Improve the patient experience in every step of the HIV/AIDS journey
- Demonstrate system and cost optimization

The project's strategic goals are supported by the following initiatives:

- We must transform how we screen for HIV
- We must streamline HIV/AIDS diagnosis and linkage to care
- We must continue to develop site-specific programs to consistently deliver high-quality services across participating pilot sites
- We must deal with the determinants of health that are negatively influencing the health of people living with HIV and AIDS
- We must engage in a highly collaborative process that will allow us to learn from each other and turn knowledge into practice

How:

STOP HIV/AIDS will be implemented by the participating health authorities with the involvement of key community partners, including those affected by HIV. Community and Aboriginal engagement and partnership are critical to an accountable, responsive, and effective pilot project. The health authorities and community partners will work collaboratively to identify and address gaps in HIV/AIDS services; to develop a new approach to HIV testing and early detection; to support individuals on treatment by improving access to HIV/AIDS services; and to ensure a seamless link between primary and specialist HIV/AIDS services.

Leadership

Two committees will be responsible for the implementation of the STOP HIV/AIDS pilot project.

STOP HIV/AIDS Steering Committee

The formation of a senior steering committee has been proposed to provide executive leadership and oversight throughout the pilot project implementation.

STOP HIV/AIDS Leadership Committee

The STOP HIV/AIDS Leadership Committee reports to the Steering Committee and will engage in a collaborative process with partners and stakeholders to ensure the goals and targets of the pilot project are met. The committee's purpose is to develop planning that supports the implementation of the pilot project and ensures representation for core stakeholders.

Representation

STOP HIV/AIDS implementation will be supported by the Leadership Committee, which includes representation from the pilot health authorities (Vancouver Coastal Health, Northern Health, Providence Health Care), the Provincial Health Services Authority, and the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS.

The pilot health authorities will designate one individual each to represent the community and conduct a comprehensive consultation and community engagement process. Aboriginal representation will include the Provincial Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor and a designated Aboriginal community representative, identified by the Provincial Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor.



PATIENT CENTERED: The STOP HIV/AIDS pilot project will be culturally sensitive and will recognize the uniqueness of each patient's journey

Representation on the Leadership Committee is as follows:

- BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS
- Northern Health
- Providence Health Care
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Provincial Health Services Authority
- Community members (Vancouver Coastal Health, Northern Health, and the Aboriginal community)
- Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor
- Ministry of Health Services
- Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport

“The purpose of the STOP HIV/AIDS Leadership Committee is to develop planning that supports the implementation of the pilot project and ensures representation for core stakeholders.”

Patient Experience

All treatment provided through STOP HIV/AIDS will be patient centered. The pilot project aims to address the underlying social and environmental factors complicating the delivery of services to individuals facing multiple barriers to care. The program will be culturally sensitive and recognize the uniqueness of each patient's journey with HIV/AIDS.

Expanded treatment and testing services will be voluntary for all participants and provided in strict compliance with existing HIV treatment guidelines. HAART is the internationally accepted standard of care and has been improving the health of millions living with HIV and AIDS for more than a decade.

STOP HIV/AIDS aims to expand the availability of HAART to clinically eligible individuals in British Columbia.

Aboriginal Issues

The STOP HIV/AIDS Leadership Committee recognizes the disproportionate impact of HIV and AIDS on Aboriginal British Columbians. Despite representing 3.8% of the Canadian population, Aboriginals accounted for more than 25% of new HIV infections in 2006. STOP HIV/AIDS aims to address HIV-related disparities for Aboriginal British Columbians and ensure all HIV-positive individuals are equally able to access life-saving treatment.

The Leadership Committee is aware of barriers to health care faced by many Aboriginal people. Historical traumas, a legacy of abuse, and mistrust of the system present significant obstacles to the effective delivery of treatment. STOP HIV/AIDS will work with Aboriginal persons living with HIV and AIDS to address these barriers. To support engagement with Aboriginal communities, representation on the STOP HIV/AIDS Leadership Committee will include the Provincial Aboriginal Health Physician Advisor and a designated community representative.

Implementation Update

The pilot project health authorities (Vancouver Coastal Health, Northern Health Authority, Providence Health Care) will lead the regional implementation of STOP HIV/AIDS, with the support of the Provincial Health Services Authority, under the leadership of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS.

STOP HIV/AIDS planning is currently in progress. A comprehensive plan that will include consultation with partners is under development. The STOP HIV/AIDS Leadership Committee has developed terms of reference, including the project's mandate and strategic goals.

The Leadership Committee has identified key indicators of progress and evaluation strategies. Specific work plans are being developed by each of the pilot project partners, and a preliminary report has been submitted to the Ministry of Health Services and the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport.

What changes can I expect from STOP HIV/AIDS?

• Improved HIV testing services

STOP HIV/AIDS will expand the availability of HIV testing by health care providers. This improved screening process will ensure timely diagnosis of new HIV cases and allow earlier engagement in treatment and support services. Testing for hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted infections will also be expanded.

• Better linkage to primary and specialist HIV care

STOP HIV/AIDS will engage and retain patients in care by linking them to physicians experienced in the clinical management of HIV and AIDS. The program will also ensure a seamless link between primary and specialist HIV services.

• Patient-centered treatment experience

Treatment will be culturally sensitive and will uphold every individual's right to safety, respect, privacy, and autonomy. STOP HIV/AIDS aims to improve the quality and safety of HIV care and increase patient satisfaction at every step of the HIV/AIDS continuum.

• Increased connection to HIV/AIDS support services

STOP HIV/AIDS will help link patients to support services that address barriers to care, including unstable housing, food insecurity, addictions and mental health issues.

Funding

Operating costs for STOP HIV/AIDS are funded through the B.C. Ministry of Health Services and total \$48 million over four years.

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