

Project Preliminary Findings

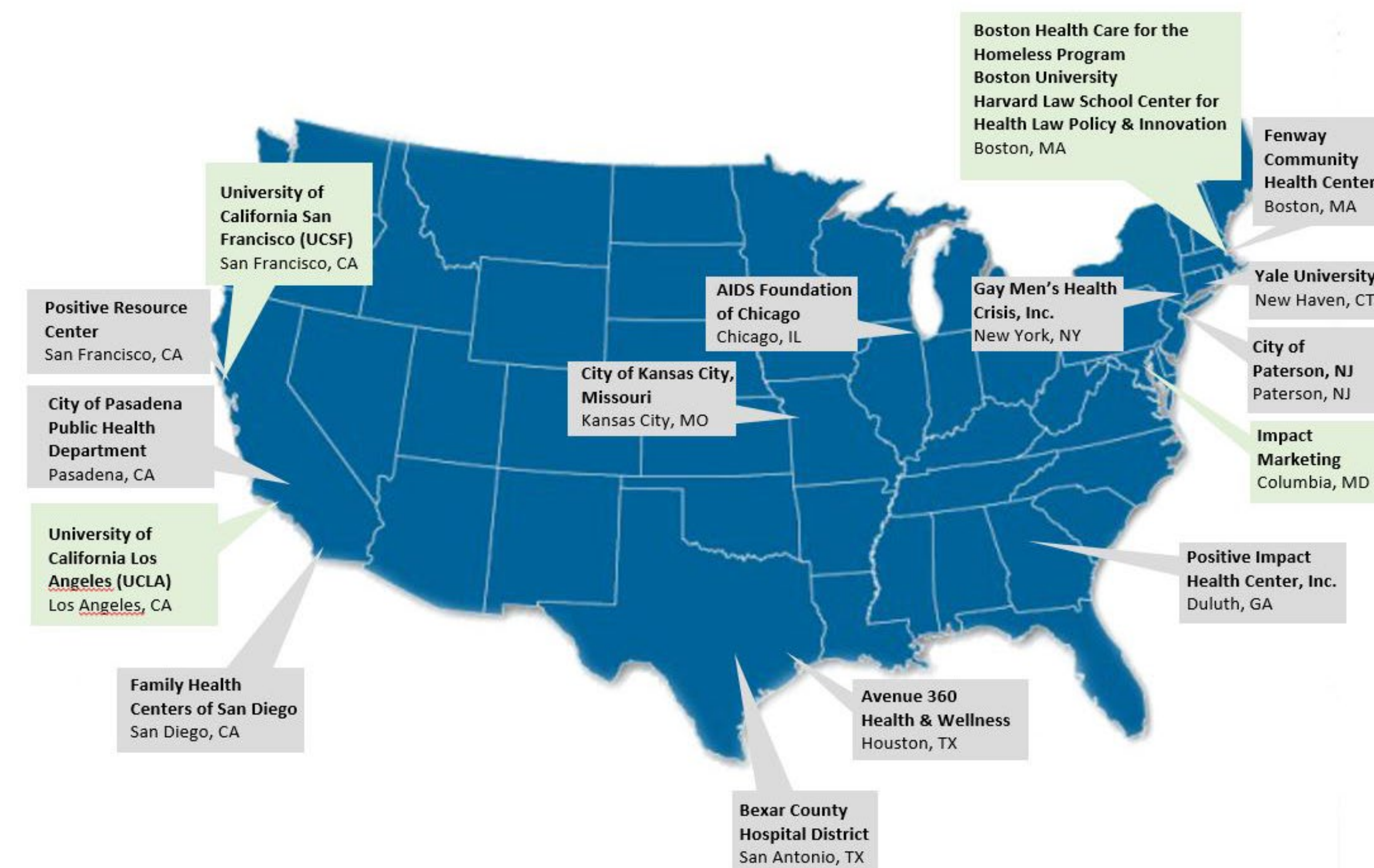
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Background

Both the lack of housing stability and employment can decrease engagement in HIV primary care for people living with HIV (PLWH). Funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration as a Special Projects of National Significance program, the HIV, Housing & Employment Project aims to successfully provide PLWH in low-income and racial and ethnic minority communities with coordinated HIV primary care, housing, and employment. Boston University School of Social Work serves as the Evaluation and Technical Assistance Provider (ETAP) to the project's twelve demonstration sites across the country. Now in the second year of the 3-year initiative, demonstration sites are implementing innovative practices to link PLWH to housing, employment, and HIV care services and forming multisector collaborations between housing, employment, and health care providers to reduce barriers to services.

The HIV, Housing & Employment Project Demonstration Sites



Methods

Client Eligibility Criteria:

- 18+ years;
- PLWH who is either newly diagnosed with HIV, has missed recent HIV primary care visits, is at risk for falling out of care, or is not virally suppressed;
- Is homeless or unstably housed;
- Is unemployed or underemployed

ETAP Activities:

- Provision of technical assistance and training to support implementation of program sites' intervention models
- Site data monitoring and evaluation in collaboration with BU School of Public Health's Biostatistics and Epidemiology Data Analytics Center (BEDAC)

Methods (continued)

Demonstration Site Organizational Settings:

- Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) Health Center (2)
- City Health Department (4)
- Federally Qualified Health Center (3)
- Community Organization (2)
- University (1)

Demonstration Site Intervention Models:

- Building and strengthening community partnerships
- Care coordination/navigation
- Streamlining referral process
- Streamlining intake assessment forms
- Engaging Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)-funded transitional housing supports for RWHAP clients
- System-wide training of Case Managers

- Expanding IT capacity
- Assigning designated staff at jurisdiction's DPH for coordinating RWHAP and HOPWA

Evaluation:

- Primary client outcomes:
 - HIV viral load suppression
 - Retention in HIV care
 - Employment stability
 - Housing stability
- Primary implementation outcomes:
 - Key strategies for addressing housing and employment needs among low income PLWH from racial/ethnic minority communities
 - Barriers and facilitators to implementing and integrating models into sites' existing work

Results

The following data are baseline characteristics of the 736 clients enrolled in the multi-site evaluation as of April 2, 2019.

Age:

Mean	39.9 years
Min, Max	18 years, 70 years

Gender Identity:

- Male: 77.6%
- Female: 16.3%
- Transgender Man: 0.7%
- Transgender Woman: 3.8%

Race

- Non-Hispanic Black: 45.0%
- Non-Hispanic White: 14.1%
- Hispanic: 28.5%
- Multi-race: 8.8%

Health Insurance

- Public Insurance: 76.9%
- Private Insurance: 4.2%
- Other: 9.9%

Incarceration History

- Have been in jail: 68.8%
 - Mean length of stay: 22.1 days
- Have been to prison: 33.3%
 - Mean length of stay: 106.5 days

HIV Medication Adherence

- Very poor/Poor: 17.1%
- Fair/Good: 26.4%
- Very good/Excellent: 55.8%

Top 3 Places where Clients Currently Live

- With a friend or family member: 37.6%
- Transitional housing: 16.4%
- In a street/vehicle/abandoned building/anywhere outside: 14.0%

Employment Status

- Currently unemployed: 80.7%
- Consider themselves to be underemployed: 72.0%
- Would like to be employed: 95.9%

Top 5 Unmet Needs

- Job training/Employment assistance: 74.4%
- Financial: 70.1%
- Housing: 64.0%
- Dental Care: 62.5%
- Legal: 57.5%

Results (continued)

- Many clients self-reported very good or excellent HIV medication adherence (55.8%) despite being either newly diagnosed, at risk for falling out of care, not virally suppressed, and/or having missed recent HIV primary care visits.
- Self-report of HIV stigma was common, reflected in the 46.7% of clients who felt ashamed of having HIV.
- Clients' living situations varied whether they were unstably housed or experiencing homelessness, although 86% clients reported having experienced homelessness at least one time in their lives.
- While 80.7% of clients were unemployed, 95.9% of clients reported a desire to work either at the time of enrollment or in the future.
- Seven sites reported that their staff received trainings in cultural humility, including in topics such as Health Equity; Unconscious Bias; Trauma Informed Care; Undoing Racism; Impacts of Stigma; Health Disparities in HIV; and Transgender, Violence, Race, Health & Financial Equity.
- Site program staff have completed ongoing ETAP TA webinars such as Balancing SSI/SSDI & Wages, Recruiting High Acuity Clients, The Intersection of Housing & Employment for Clients With Incarceration Histories, Immigration and Documentation, and Sustainability and Integration.

Discussion

Now in the second year of the 3-year project, the ETAP has observed common challenges with program implementation across the twelve demonstration sites. Motivating clients to go back to work has been difficult for program staff. Although most clients show interest in obtaining employment or furthering their job skills and careers, fear of losing benefits and returning to work after being unemployed for a long period of time are barriers to pursuing employment.

Each demonstration site faces structural challenges that restrict clients' abilities to gain housing and meaningful employment. Limited affordable housing prevents clients from maintaining stable housing. Finding and securing employment for PLWH is challenging when HIV stigma is pervasive in many communities. PLWH who face other types of stigma, such as those who have incarceration histories, further experience discrimination from employment and housing opportunities.

The lack of a steady income and a permanent space to live in contributes to poor HIV health outcomes among PLWH. Thus, the HIV, Housing & Employment Project aims to address the social determinants of housing, employment, and health and promote more equitable health outcomes through the:

- development and strengthening of community partnerships,
- utilization of existing community resources, and
- strategic coordination of HIV care and social services to provide patient-centered care.