

Project Abstract Summary

Massachusetts proposes an innovative new partnership between the MDPH Bureau of Infectious Disease (BID) and community health centers (CHCs) serving racial/ethnic minority populations both living with and at risk for HIV infection. The initiative is titled Massachusetts Increasing Medical Partnerships to Advance Care and Treatment (hereafter, Mass IMPACT), and builds on a set of capacities and opportunities unique to Massachusetts—an established community health center infrastructure, near universal health insurance coverage, recent implementation of electronic laboratory reporting for all CD4+ T-cell counts and HIV viral loads, and the determination to intensify our public health response to HIV-related disparities. Massachusetts will build on recent experiences with innovative linkage to care interventions to expand our public health efforts in collaboration with CHCs.

Mass IMPACT will establish new or expand existing HIV prevention, testing, care, and treatment programs in six CHCs, and will engage a minimum of 300 new HIV+ patients in health center services of which at least 50% will be racial/ethnic minorities. Our approaches include improving the capacity of CHCs to deliver HIV prevention, care, and treatment services; increasing cultural competency to reach gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) and substance users; implementation of routine and targeted HIV testing; creating new mechanisms to share HIV laboratory data reported to the Massachusetts HIV/AIDS Surveillance Program (MHASP) to identify gaps in care for HIV+ patients in real time; and deploying Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) in the community to provide linkage to care, re-engagement in care, and partner services to CHC patients.

We will accomplish these goals through a multifaceted set of activities, including development of new policies, procedures, and clinical decision protocols at community health centers, creating new and expanded information exchange opportunities between MDPH and community health center partners, increasing public health interventions for newly diagnosed and out-of-care community health center patients living with HIV infection by disease intervention specialists (DIS), and technical assistance and training associated with these expanded capacities.

We will work in partnership with CHC leaders and clinicians, the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, our regional AIDS Education and Training Center, and public health and policy experts to provide technical assistance and capacity building supports to increase HIV prevention and care services delivered by CHCs. The outcomes will include identifying more persons who are living with HIV, linking them to responsive medical care and treatment in local CHCs, reducing HIV viral load (community and individual), and improving health promotion and disease prevention outcomes along the HIV care continuum.