



The Importance of Collaboration in the field of HIV/AIDS

By: Corynna Hines,
Capacity Building Coordinator

Faith-based and community-based organizations (F/CBOs) play a vital role in the provision of HIV/AIDS services amid their respective communities. Many of these localized agencies demonstrate their capacity to operate under an immense scarcity of manpower and financial resources. At the federal level, multiple funding streams designated for HIV care often lack coordination and efficiency. This subsequently impacts access to prevention and treatment services among high risk populations and/or growing numbers of individuals living with HIV (Kates, 2004). The complexity of treatment for HIV/AIDS necessitates access to a comprehensive continuum of care and providers with specialized expertise (Kates, 2004). As such, conjoined efforts between agencies can help to reduce the difficulty presented by financing systems, low personnel retention rates, linguistic and cultural barriers, etc. through resource mobilization.

In order to successfully accomplish this, agencies must steer their focus towards collaboration and linkages, as it provides opportunity for sharing and merging resources. Most, if not all, federal and state funding sources are underscoring the need to build inter-organizational relationships to close service gaps, improve internal systems, eliminate service duplication, and promote the proper use of funds. Collaboration offers an informal or formal structure for mutual engagement in order to achieve desired outcomes. Moreover, organizational linkages provide a strategy for executing a collaborative relationship because separate entities can serve their target groups by linking one or more of their service components to that of another agency's. As a result, agencies connected together through a collaborative partnership can ensure that a client's health needs are met because collectively they offer continuity of care.

Maximizing the use of inter-organizational resources involves clear communication of expectations and desired outcomes. The common threads inherent to successful collaboration and linkages are that of compromise, common vision, and cooperation. Persons who represent F/CBOs must unify by forging sustainable relationships that embrace the strategic and continuous process of collaborating and linking services, especially amid capital loss for programmatic operation and growing numbers of persons infected with HIV. The interests and assets of an agency need to converge with other organization(s) to promote the accomplishment of broader goals. Partnering agencies should be committed to initiatives that promote consensus and facilitate the effective use of available resources. In order to continue providing valuable HIV/AIDS services to populations in need, organizations must rely upon collaborative efforts that foster linkages because it enhances their ability to remain responsive to the diverse issues of their clients.

References

Kates, J. Kaiser Family Foundation. (2004). *HIV/AIDS Policy Issue Brief*. Financing HIV/AIDS Care: A Quilt With Many Holes, 1-22.