

Toronto People With AIDS Foundation

Poz Prevention Position Paper



Our Position

PWA is committed to taking a leadership role in developing programs and communities that support PHAs right to live healthy, positive, sexual lives and access the information, resources and tools required to help them achieve that.

We believe that PHAs have the right to live within their individual framework of what it means to live positively, to feel empowered, and to have access to what they need to make healthy decisions within that framework and also that this will support any efforts to incorporate prevention (HIV infection/reinfection & STI) as part of their overall health and well-being.

In line with our commitment and belief we are undertaking Poz Prevention initiatives to complement and strengthen existing HIV support and prevention efforts and that recognize that both HIV positive and HIV negative individuals have important roles to play in this work.

Definition

Poz Prevention at its core is the full involvement and meaningful engagement of Poz individuals in all prevention and programming efforts that support our sexual health. Poz prevention prioritizes the engagement of PHAs in our sexual health and well being and in our relationships with others.

History

Until very recently all HIV prevention was directed toward the uninfected. Although this seemed logical, it excluded the involvement of many who are passionate and knowledgeable about HIV transmission within our community. In addition, it resulted in some campaigns and materials that unintentionally contributed to broader stigma and discrimination experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS. PWA has led the way in making a fundamental shift whereby HIV positive individuals are becoming involved and leading in the development of resources, knowledge and programs that will provide HIV positive individuals with the information, tools and skills needed to maximize their sexual health and positively impact HIV transmission.

Context

Poz Prevention is a conceptual framework and strategic model that recognizes HIV positive people as people, rather than simply as potential sources of new HIV infections. It is a framework consciously grounded in sexual health and improving the lives of Poz individuals as the primary goal. As such, Poz Prevention is an exciting program within our Treatment and Support Programs providing direct, practical support services to all people living with HIV/AIDS.

Poz individuals are people interested in their health and the health of others and are not vectors of disease to be controlled or avoided. Poz individuals can take better care of their sexual health when they can make informed decisions and have useful information about sex, communicating with sex partners, HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). By improving the sexual, physical, and emotional health of PHAs, we support us in our ability to make decisions that will be healthy for them and the ones they have relationships with.

Values

PWA has adopted the values developed by the GMSH Poz Prevention Working Group outlined below.

- Full, satisfying and healthy emotional and sexual relationships.
- Living free from stigma and discrimination.
- The confidentiality of all medical information, including HIV status and information specific to their sexual health.
- The importance of acknowledging the diversity of individuals, their cultures, communities and self definitions.
- Involvement in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of programs in support of their health.
- The development of new prevention technologies that meet the needs of individuals with HIV and are consistent with their sexual lives.

Programming

PWA's leadership in this exciting new work has included:

- founding membership in the Poz Prevention Working Group of the Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance (prior to the formation of the GMSH, linked to the Ontario Strategy on HIV Prevention for Gay Men),
- development of Poz Prevention materials in partnership with the GMSH:
 - Poz Prevention Manual for service providers providing services to gay men living in Ontario,
 - Positively Healthy, a gay man's guide to sex and health in Ontario
- Partnering with CATIE to recreate and distribute the GMSH partner materials for national distribution,
- ACAP funded project - Engaging PHAs in Poz Prevention for Gay Men
 - developing Poz Prevention programs for gay PHAs
 - direct support and educational contact with gay PHAs in outreach and group programs;
 - enhance knowledge exchange through a Program Advisory of front line workers and an Ideas Forum for Senior Staff from agencies with an interest in Poz Prevention;
 - training service providers at PWA and other agencies in Poz Prevention.
- Ongoing commitment to building in transferability of any program materials and activities so that Poz Prevention efforts are relevant to all people living with HIV/AIDS and can be shared appropriately with community partners.

Board Approved: January 28, 2010