

Barriers to and Retention in Support Services among HIV+ Transwomen

PI: Erin Wilson DrPH

Co-Is: Jae Sevelius PhD, Shalini Eddens

Project Description

The purpose of this study is to examine barriers to and retention in support services among HIV+ transwomen (women who were assigned a male sex at birth) and to explore the challenges and potential benefits of integrating HIV+ transwomen into services for HIV+ non-transgender women. This study will collect qualitative data with 14 HIV+ transwomen and 10 support services providers in Alameda County, CA.

This study will provide preliminary data to inform an R01 application responding to an RFA to examine the test, treat and retain paradigm.

Significance

The increased identification of HIV/AIDS among transgender women, or transwomen, has recently received much attention due to the disproportionate impact of the epidemic on this at-risk group. HIV+ transwomen also have low access to care that has led to disproportionately high morbidity and mortality. A critical bridge to HIV care services for marginalized populations is support services. Yet, support services targeting the specific needs of this population are limited, perhaps explaining the late diagnoses, high morbidity, and early mortality since AIDS diagnoses observed among transgender women. There is a need for research to investigate access to and retention in support services among HIV+ transwomen and to explore ways in which HIV+ transwomen may be integrated into existing programs that have not historically included services for this population.