

# The San Francisco Disclosure Initiative

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A new community-wide project of HIV Prevention, San Francisco Department of Public Health



Removing the silence and stigma around HIV status makes us all healthier.

# Why a Disclosure Initiative?

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- San Francisco has culturally not embraced the concept of PCRS
- Disclosure of HIV status is still a major concern of HIV negative and HIV positive persons
- Community has developed new norms around risk reduction and negotiated safety
- There is a growing silence around HIV status for many people in the community
- People are still making decisions about who they have sex with and the kinds of sexual activities they're willing to have based on assumptions about their partners status

# Changing community norms around disclosure on two levels

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## Personal (behavioral) level

Asking and telling helps sexual partners decide what kind of sex works best for both so they can avoid the transmission of HIV and other STIs.

## Community (normative) level

Removing the silence and stigma around HIV status makes us all healthier.

# How is this different from PCRS?

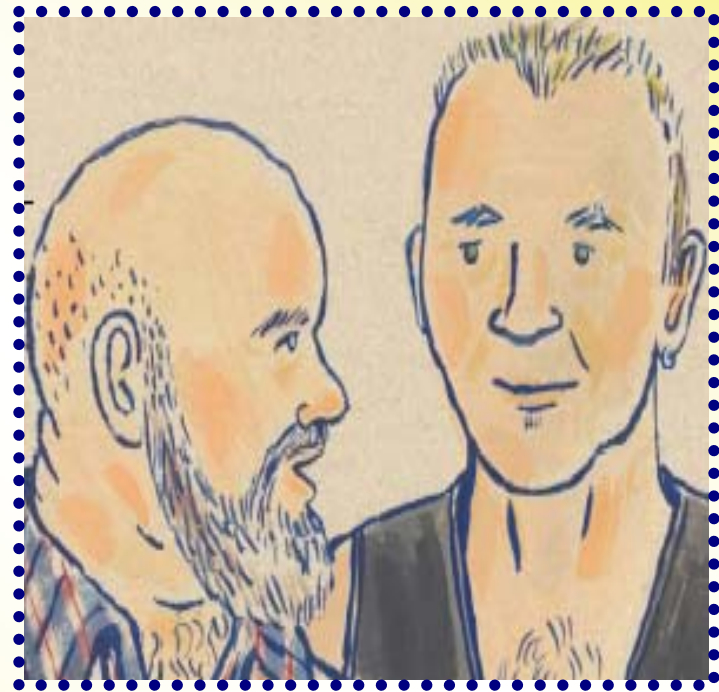
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- A new prevention approach that is community driven
- An approach recognizing that many people in the community have developed their own norms around harm reduction and sexual activity, norms that often are at odds with our traditional public health approaches to HIV prevention
- A client-centered approach on a community-wide level
- An approach that empowers people to share as much information with their partners as they can **BEFORE THEY HAVE SEX** so together they can make the decisions that's best for both partners

# Why Disclosure

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Normalizing the discussion of HIV status with sexual partners and needle sharing partners allows for the negotiation of sexual and drug use activities that work best for both people.



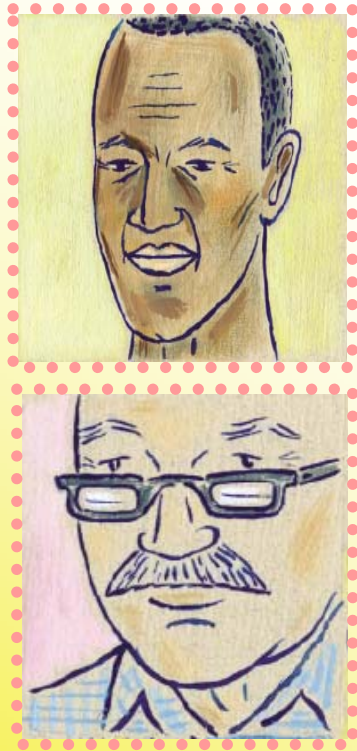
# Goals and Objectives of the Disclosure Initiative

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- Begin to de-stigmatize the disclosure of HIV status on a community-wide level
- Normalizing discussions of HIV status throughout the community
- Change community norms around 'asking and telling' of HIV status
- Empower sexually active people to 'ask and tell' before, during and after sex
- Educate and empower providers
- Increase skill sets of providers so they can better help their clients around 'asking and telling' before, during and after sex
- Increase awareness of different disclosure assistance services throughout the City

# Building New Community Norms

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**THE MESSAGE:** Some of us have sex without condoms. Sometimes, we don't know the other person's HIV status and they don't know ours.

In these situations, it's important to ASK and TELL.

Together, we and our sex partners can decide what kinds of sex works best for us both.

A lot of people make assumptions about the HIV status of their sex partners. We need to help break the silence around HIV status by encouraging them to ask and tell before, during and after they have condomless sex.

# Guiding Principals for Providers of Disclosure Assistance Services

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- Disclosure is as important for negatives as well as positives
- Recognizes that many in the community have developed new community norms around prevention, incorporating condomless sex in the context of negotiated safety (serosorting and strategic positioning) as a risk reduction strategy
- Community empowering (removing the stigma around knowing each other's HIV status will make life easier and better for all of us)
- Knowledge of HIV status allows both partners to better determine what works best for both of them
- Client centered, voluntary, confidential, culturally relevant, sex positive
- Support around disclosure is ongoing

# Guiding Principles (continued)

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- Asking and telling does not replace supporting clients around other risk reduction strategies and other safer sex negotiations
- Asking and telling has different connotations for HIV positive people, HIV negative people, and people who do not know their status
- Knowing your HIV status is necessary for disclosure
- Being willing to tell the other person what you have been doing sexually with other people is necessary for disclosure

# The Bottom Line

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Positive or negative, knowing your HIV status is important for your physical, mental and sexual health.

For those of us who are negative, we need to make decisions with our sex partners that helps us to stay that way.



And for those of us who are positive, it's important that we make decisions about the kinds of sex we're willing to have so we don't get exposed to STDs and further weaken our immune systems.



Many HIV- people are uncomfortable having sex with HIV+ people even when condoms are used, and visa versa. Sex is best when it is honest, open, free from fear and respectful of the other person's preferences.

# Concerns people might need support with:

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- Trusting or not trusting what other people say
- Not trusting that a negative test result that someone got a month ago means that the person is in fact HIV negative
- Fear of rejection
- Performance anxiety
- Feelings of inadequacy around being able to have the 'asking and telling' conversations
- Poz people, negative people and people who have never been (or not recently been) tested may feel stigmatized over their HIV status
- Why disclose? Feelings that it's the other person's responsibility to take care of themselves? Questioning why you should disclose if you're going to use condoms anyway?
- Benefits and concerns around serosorting

# Concerns (continued)

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- Serosorting and barebacking does not solve issues of sexual health
- On-line hooking up
- Different feelings about the need to ask and tell with anonymous tricks vs. people you're in (or want to be in) relationships with
- Group sex situations
- What the buzz words really mean
- Domestic violence
- Window periods for viral detection even if a rapid test comes up negative
- Disclosing your HIV positive status may needlessly create fear and anxiety in the other person

# Asking providers the questions that will help them in their work

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- Are there different issues when working with HIV- vs. HIV+ vs. don't know HIV status clients?
- Are there different issues when working with women vs. men vs. trans?
- Are there different issues when working with straight vs. gay populations?
- What are the uncomfortable aspects **FOR YOU AS A PROVIDER** in helping people:
  1. examine their sexual desires
  2. normalize 'asking and telling' into their sex play
  3. negotiate sex behaviors that are best for themselves and their partners
  4. decide what their limits are sexually
  5. normalize their discussion of HIV status
  6. assess what they might do in situations not conducive to asking and telling

# SF Disclosure Initiative Activities

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- Producing educational materials appropriate for HIV- & HIV+
- Marketing campaigns promoting the personal and community benefits of disclosure and normalizing the discussion of HIV status
- DI staff to support community members, clients and providers around disclosure issues and available disclosure assistance services
- A new website: [www.hivdisclosure.com](http://www.hivdisclosure.com)
- Disclosure trainings provided to all SF prevention, prevention with positives, counseling & testing and CARE programs

# Disclosure Glossary (see handouts)

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- Professional health terms and acronyms
- Online terms and acronyms

# Contact Information

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## For more information:

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