

Washington County Report

ACDP Health Equity Mini-grant Reporting – Washington County Public Health Rapid Testing and Response to Persons Unstably Housed in Washington County.

Data

Washington County Public Health (WCPH) was glad to be able to use this grant to expand our ability for outreach testing to a sub population in our community that remains difficult to reach. Current estimates from the Point of Time federal survey put the number of un-housed persons in Washington County at 500 on any given day. This number does not account for those persons that are unstably housed, exchanging drugs or sex for housing, or “couch surfing”. We also know that injection and illicit drug use, mental illness and minority stigma play a crucial role in limiting both housing stability and access to preventive health services. The transient nature of seeking shelter means that county borders remain invisible and persons move throughout the metro region regularly, making the ability to accurately count numbers difficult. 25% of persons accessing syringe exchange services at Outside In report a connection to Washington County. Persons who are housed in the Washington County Jail and the Community Corrections program are often released with drug and other minor offenses back into the community with no fixed address to return to. It is with the above knowledge coupled with increase rate of syphilis, HIV and Hepatitis C in persons who inject drugs WCPH determined the need to expand testing services into the field. To reach persons where they are at, decrease barriers to testing and improve referral services to a marginalized population in Washington County is a key component of our grant.

Reflection Narrative:

Grant funds were used to purchase 300 rapid tests to use in field testing operations beginning in July. Control solutions, lancets and three at Home HIV tests for contacts to HIV that may refuse testing in any place other than home setting.

The rapid point of care tests include Hepatitis C, Syphilis and HIV test kits. WCPH has purchased and outfitted a testing van that includes two private testing rooms and supplies to complete testing, referral and education to persons in nontraditional settings through separate grant funding. The van will travel to homeless camps and a consistent location on a weekly basis to provide testing services, syphilis treatment and syringe exchange services to decrease the burden of disease in this vulnerable population.

We just acquired the kits at the end of June and have just begun outreach testing. So far, the schedule includes Project Homeless Connect on July 19th. This event will include testing services as well as vaccine administration of Hepatitis A vaccine to persons unstably housed. We are also scheduled for Virginia Garcia Cornelius Health Fair and Neighborhood Health Center Health fair, both of which serve a large number of minority residents and their families.

Starting in September, and with the permission of the City of Hillsboro Parks and Recs, we will be stationed weekly at Dairy Creek Park. Here we will provide rapid testing services, vaccine administration and syringe exchange. The purchase of rapid tests through this grant will allow us to treat syphilis infections, provide HIV wrap around services for persons newly infected with HIV and referral services for persons with Hepatitis C. Vaccine administration for Hep A and minimal wound care will also be available. A public health nurse as well as contracted syringe exchange peer navigators will be co-located on the van.

Sharing:

We currently do not have flyers but will be creating them in the next few weeks. The following photos are of the van that has been active this summer at testing events. So far, we have been working hard doing outreach and education to Hillsboro Police, Washington County sheriffs dept., mental and behavioral health providers, peer recovery mentors and Community Corrections staff to gain support for our work. We will be contracting with a CBO to provide peer lead syringe exchange along side the public health nurse at field sites early September.

