

Field Action Reports

The Evolution of the Fenway Community Health Model

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Fenway Community Health was founded by community activists in 1971 in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston, Mass, and within a decade had rapidly expanded its medical services for gay men in response to the AIDS epidemic. Increased expertise and cultural competence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) care led to expansion of medical services to address broader community concerns, ranging from substance use to parenting issues to domestic and homophobic violence, as well as specialized programs for lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals.

Fenway began as a grassroots neighborhood clinic. In 1975, the center recorded 5000 patient care visits; in 2000, Fenway's clinical departments recorded 50 850 visits by 8361 individuals, including more than 1100 individuals receiving HIV-associated care. The center now has more than 170 staff people responsible for clinical programs, community education, research, administration, planning, and development. Over the past few years, Fenway's annual budget has exceeded \$10 million.

Fenway has established standards for improved cultural competence about LGBT health issues for other health providers and has developed programs to educate the general community about specific LGBT health concerns. This health center may provide a model of comprehensive LGBT health services that have a local impact.

The mission of Fenway Community Health is to enhance the physical and mental health of the general community, with an emphasis on services for LGBT individuals. Fenway is 1 of only 9 LGBT-specific community health centers in the United States. Fenway's services include primary medical care and specialty HIV/AIDS, obstetrics, gynecology, gerontology, podiatry, and dermatology services; mental health and addiction services; complementary therapies including chiropractic, massage, acupuncture, and nutrition therapies; health promotion programs, community education programs, programs for the prevention of domestic and homophobic violence, and parenting programs; and family planning services that include alternative insemination (Table 1).

Fenway has developed unique programs for community health education and promotion, community-based research, health policy advocacy, and leadership in ongoing and emerging LGBT health care coalitions. These programs have been evaluated by external monitors, including federal agencies, and have been replicated elsewhere in the United States. Fenway has also developed an active professional educational program, participating in the training of medical students, residents, social workers and other mental health interns, nurses, and other allied health professionals, and many staff have appointments at local professional schools.

Medical Department

The medical department is the largest Fenway clinical department. It includes an inte-

grated clinical practice of physicians teamed with other primary care providers (nurse-practitioners, physician's assistants, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses) and medical social workers, who deal with issues ranging from health insurance access to housing and provide triage for mental health services, as well as a freestanding community-based physician practitioner model. Primary care providers can readily refer clients to on-site mental health and other prevention services, including stress reduction programs, nutritional counseling, and substance abuse treatment. Patients who need to be hospitalized are followed by their Fenway health care providers at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Mental Health and Addiction Department

Staff psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers offer a wide range of mental health services, including individual, group, couples, and family therapy and psychiatric medication evaluation and management, which includes 24-hour beeper coverage to handle emergencies. The department oversees one of the largest HIV counseling and testing sites in New England and offers support groups for individuals living with HIV as well as individuals who are HIV-negative and need support in maintaining low-risk behaviors.

Fenway has developed a program of services for survivors of domestic and homophobic violence, including urgent medical care; short-term crisis counseling and longer-term

Highlights

- Since 1971, Fenway Community Health has grown from a grassroots neighborhood clinic to a sophisticated health center offering comprehensive integrated services with an emphasis on LGBT health.
 - Fenway is 1 of only 9 LGBT-specific community health centers in the United States.
 - The programs developed at Fenway can serve as a model of comprehensive, culturally competent health care for LGBT individuals that can be applied in other settings.
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therapy for survivors, their partners, and other loved ones; referrals to LGBT-sensitive medical and legal professionals; and advocacy to ensure that cases are aggressively investigated and prosecuted. The staff has also provided education, training, and consultation to first responders (emergency medical technicians, police, and public officials).

Wellness Programs and Community Education

Over the years, Fenway has developed an integrated program of community education and health promotion to complement its primary clinical services. Current activities include HIV risk reduction and health promotion programs for infected persons, with specialized activities oriented toward different communities (e.g., African-American women, younger Latino men). Many of these programs are conducted both in Spanish and in English. They include small group sessions, outreach, referral, and collaboration with local health organizations serving communities of color.

Fenway offers smoking cessation education (including educational presentations to schools and agencies), support groups, and acupuncture. Fenway also maintains the largest gay and lesbian help and crisis intervention telephone hotline in New England. The hotline is staffed 7 nights per week and provides confidential information, referrals, crisis intervention, and support to callers nationwide. A special hotline addresses the concerns of LGBT youth. Fenway sponsors community health education workshops, forums, and lectures that have dealt with updates on HIV treatments, prevention, and self-care strategies as well as other community health concerns, such as hepatitis.

Research and Evaluation Department

Fenway initiated one of the nation's first community-based AIDS research programs in 1983 and received its first state and federal funding in 1984. Fenway's initial research endeavors derived from the need to better understand the AIDS epidemic that was emerging in the gay community in the early 1980s. The first AIDS diagnosis among Fenway patients was made in 1981, and prospective epidemiological studies soon followed.¹ The first estimates of HIV prevalence and incidence in New England were derived from Fenway studies.²

Close to 100 peer-reviewed publications have been generated by Fenway's collaborations with laboratory, clinical, behavioral, and public health researchers at Harvard, Tufts, and Brown universities. Fenway has been a leader in HIV prevention research and was recently awarded a contract from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases to serve as the primary

agency for a consortium including investigators at Brown University and in southern India.

The research and evaluation department consists of more than 30 highly trained and experienced staff, including physicians, a senior survey research methodologist and behavioral scientist, clinical psychologists, public health professionals, data analysts, regulatory affairs specialists, health educators, nurses, interviewers, and outreach workers. Fenway has an

institutional review board, as well as several community advisory boards that help the research and clinical programs staff evaluate the responsiveness of the current research agenda to community needs and expectations.

Along with its increased expertise in studying the health care concerns of men who have sex with men, Fenway has developed a lesbian health research agenda, commensurate with the expansion of clinical programs for women and

TABLE 1—Services and Programs Offered at Fenway Community Health, Boston, Mass

Medical services
Primary medical care, including comprehensive case management with liaison social workers and liaison with mental health services, including psychopharmacology
Comprehensive HIV care services
Women's health care, including obstetrics and gynecology
Other specialties, including geriatrics, dermatology and podiatry
Complementary therapies, including nutritional counseling, chiropractic, acupuncture, and massage
Coordination of medical services with other programs (parenting; management of substance use; management of sexual addictions; survival of sexual, physical, or psychological assault)
Home visits
Mental health services
Individual, group, couples, and family therapy
LGBT-specific issues (support for coming out [adults and adolescents]; groups for HIV+ people, their partners, and those at increased risk; children and LGBT parents)
Specialized support and intervention groups (survivors of trauma, lesbians with cancer, LGBT people with attention deficit disorder, sexually compulsive men, HIV-serodiscordant couples)
HIV counseling and testing, with triage to medical services for newly diagnosed HIV+ persons and triage to HIV risk reduction programs
Violence recovery programs
Individual and group support after domestic or homophobic assault
Hotlines for LGBT adults and youth
Advocacy services
Training of law enforcement and clinical professionals
Research and evaluation projects
Seroepidemiology of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases among men who have sex with men (MDPH)
Biological and behavioral factors associated with transmission of HIV among men who have sex with men (CDC)
Studies of immune responses to HIV infections and viral evolution (NIAID)
Characterization of HIV in semen before and after antiretroviral therapy (NIAID)
Community-based clinical trials of novel antiretroviral and immunomodulatory therapies (amfAR, NIAID, pharmaceutical companies)
HIV prevention interventions (NIAID, CDC, pharmaceutical companies)
Behavioral interventions to decrease HIV transmission among men who have sex with men
Preventive vaccine trials
Nonoccupational postexposure prophylaxis
Coordination of behavioral and microbicide interventions for women
Coordination of international studies
Lesbian health research (LHF, MDPH)
Needs assessments
Transmission of sexually transmitted diseases
Assessment of methodologies for alternative insemination
Evaluation of access to care (e.g., utilization of mammography)
Survey methodologies to define the local population and prevalence of health behaviors and risk factors
Health promotion interventions (e.g., smoking cessation)
Health services research (HRSA) (access to care, assessment of Ryan White services)

Note. Funding sources appear in parentheses: MDPH=Massachusetts Department of Public Health; CDC=Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; NIAID=National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases; amfAR=American Foundation for AIDS Research; LHF=Lesbian Health Fund; HRSA=Health Resources and Services Administration.

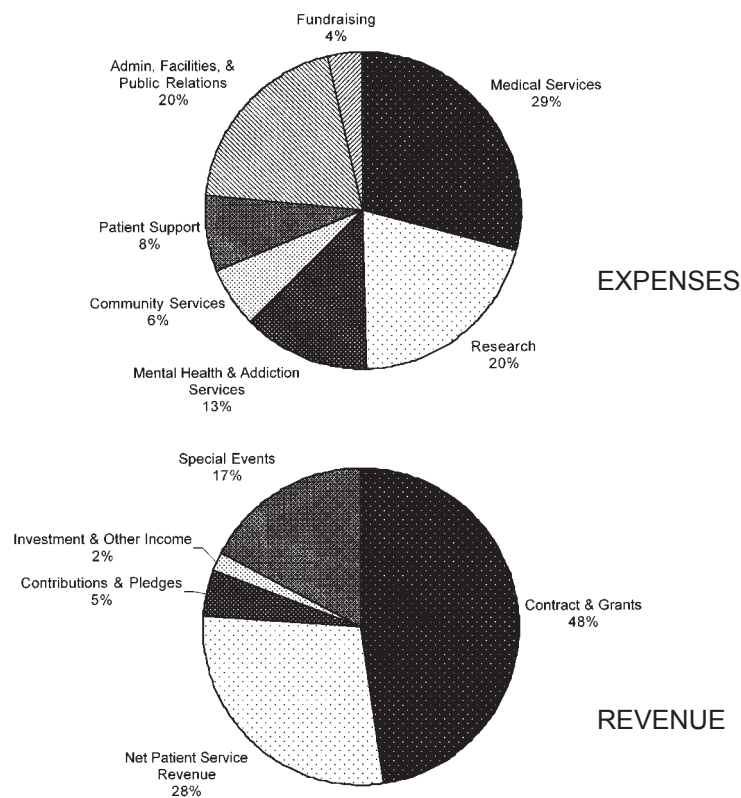


FIGURE 1—Fenway Community Health expenses and revenues, fiscal year (FY) 2000.

reflecting the community's interest and support. Studies have ranged from the assessment of lesbians' access to care to a study of sexually transmitted diseases among lesbians to the evaluation of different techniques of alternative insemination. A recent study of health care access for sexual minority women used area probability sampling for comparison with a random-digit-dialed telephone survey in the same geographic area (D. J. Bowen, J. B. Bradford, P. McMorrow, et al., unpublished data, 2001).

Program Support and Sustainability

Fenway Community Health started as a free clinic, supported partially through donations by clients and partially through subsidies from the city of Boston. Over the past 3 decades Fenway has become a sophisticated multidisciplinary center that is supported through a variety of sources, including patients' private insurance as well as Medicare and Medicaid for the payment of medical and mental health services (Figure 1). Other government-sponsored programs are available for individuals who qualify for specific programs. There is still a free care pool, so that no individual is turned away because of an inability to pay.

The health education, service evaluation, and research components of the health center are usually funded by federal grants—including grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Health Resources and Services Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration—and by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. However, there is a substantial shortfall in funding for Fenway's wide array of programs, and the center continues to solicit independent donors, corporations, and foundations and to conduct fund-raising activities. Fenway is one of the major beneficiaries of the Boston–New York AIDS Bicycle Ride.

Next Steps

Fenway Community Health has evolved over the past 3 decades from a community health center to a model demonstrating how community-based LGBT services can be integrated with other innovative and culturally specific programs. The infrastructure that evolved to respond to the complex biopsychosocial challenges of AIDS helped to jumpstart the development of a large number of activities that addressed the other health concerns of the LGBT community. We hope that the sustainability of Fenway's non-AIDS health programs

will continue as public health officials are sensitized to the special needs of LGBT people.

Although other communities may not choose to replicate or be able to provide all of the programs that are available at Fenway, we hope this report will encourage local discussions that will facilitate the development of comparable programs in other settings. The premise of Fenway Community Health is not that LGBT individuals cannot receive competent care from heterosexual health care providers or in settings where LGBT patients are not a primary focus. Rather, Fenway's unique, culturally specific programs can serve as models of care for LGBT individuals in other settings throughout the country. The goal is for LGBT individuals, wherever they are, to receive the most culturally competent and clinically proficient services possible.

In the future, Fenway Community Health will continue to disseminate information learned during the establishment of its unique programs and to train health care providers and administrators in other settings to establish programs similar to those that Fenway has proven successful in addressing the specific health care needs of LGBT individuals. □

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Resources

The Fenway Community Health Web site is available at <http://www.fenwayhealth.org>.