

March 14, 2011

**To all participants in the Community Engagement Consultation
for the S.T.O.P. HIV/AIDS Project,
January and February 2011**

Hello to all,

Please accept our sincere thanks for your contribution to the STOP HIV project. We are writing to follow up on your participation in the interviews and discussion groups conducted this past January and February, looking at how to better coordinate services for HIV testing and treatment. We are happy to include here the report summarizing feedback, as well as the recommendations for program improvement based on participants' suggestions.

If you are receiving the report by email but are having difficulty opening the document, please do not hesitate to contact Margreth by phone (604-708-5320) or email (Margreth.Tolson@vch.ca) and a paper-copy will be posted to you. Also, if you know of anyone who would like a copy of the report, please feel free to forward it on to them, or contact Margreth and she can send a copy.

As you will see, group participants contributed many insightful observations and recommendations, including:

Public health social marketing to encourage testing: Suggestions to increase uptake of testing included actively countering myths that may hinder testing in specific communities ("It's inevitable - why bother knowing?") and instead showing images of strong role models living with HIV and living long, healthy lives.

Rapid HIV test locations: Many people felt that HIV testing should not be provided at community festivals and instead suggested other locations such as health fairs, needle exchanges and community centres, or other locations that are part of people's 'normal everyday route'.

Peer Involvement: Opinion differed greatly between various communities about whether peers should provide the Rapid HIV test on their own, but most participants across groups felt that peers providing the test together with a nurse would be acceptable to their community.

Health education information and workshops for newly diagnosed people:

Many groups suggested that, upon diagnosis, priority should be placed on connecting the patient with a peer or some form of counseling as soon as possible. Workshops on a range of health self-management topics would also support people's increased confidence and motivation.

Thank you again to everyone who participated in this consultation. Your contributions were much appreciated and, as you know, your recommendations will be used to develop pilot-test strategies for the coming year. Currently we are in the process of pulling all the sources of information we received, including from clients and later this year for consultation again

Many thanks for your support, and we look forward to seeing everyone again.

Yours truly,

Margreth Tolson
Leader, Community Engagement
Vancouver Coastal Health

Kath Webster
Community Representative (Vancouver)
S.T.O.P. Leadership Committee