



# THE MPOWERMENT PROJECT FIGHTING HIV STIGMA



WORKING TOGETHER TO ENHANCE HIGH-IMPACT HIV PREVENTION FOR GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN

The Mpowerment Project (MP) can play an important role in reducing HIV stigma among young adult gay and bisexual men who have sex with men (collectively referred to as MSM). We need to be able to talk about HIV stigma in ways that we can support our brothers living with HIV.

HIV stigma is negative perceptions of HIV or people living with HIV.

HIV stigma is harmful in many ways - it keeps guys from knowing their status, from disclosing to partners, and from getting the care they need to stay healthy.

Here are a few ideas about HIV stigma to work on with your Mpowerment Project.

We would like to hear your feedback about these suggestions and any examples of how you are putting these ideas into action.



The GMHC Crew | Mpowerment Fairfax VA

## 5 ways MP can fight HIV stigma in communities of young men.

1) **M-Groups:** Our new M-Group facilitator's guide is designed for 'mixed status' groups. One goal of the group is to address issues facing young men who are living with HIV, HIV -, or who may not know their status. The interactive session allows participants to dispel myths about HIV and HIV stigma. The group encourages participants to give and receive support from each other, regardless of HIV status. The new facilitator's guide is a free download at [www.mpowerment.org](http://www.mpowerment.org)

2) **Core Group:** Have your Core Group and volunteers think about ways to make Formal Outreach events welcoming for everyone. HIV stigma affects the health of all gay and bisexual men, such as causing guys to be reluctant to get tested regularly, to talk about their HIV status with each other, and for men living with HIV to get support from their friends to regularly take their medications and stay in care. Discuss HIV discrimination and how stigma affects the health of young (con't)



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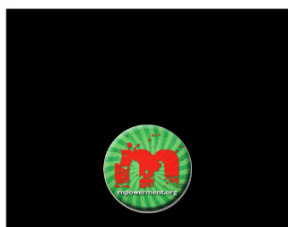
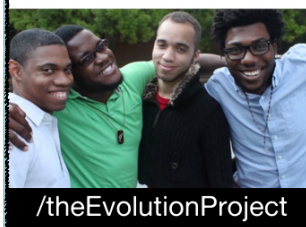


men and their community. We can all learn to be supportive when someone 'comes out' as living with HIV.

3) **Project Space:** Think about the messages that are on your Project Space walls. Be sure to have signage that lets every participant know they are in a safe space. In addition to posting house 'Ground Rules' you may add: "*Never assume anyone's status*". Coordinators can collaborate with all participants to create an HIV gossip free environment. Always intervene if you hear HIV related gossip going on, or participants showing disrespect to anyone living with HIV.

4) **Themes to consider in a MP publicity campaign:** Go beyond awareness about HIV stigma and let participants know what they can do about HIV discrimination in their communities. Let young men know what they can change about their behavior. Your stigma-free campaign can address one or more of these issues:

- \* Reducing gossip about others' HIV status.
- \* Shaming others about their status is not okay and is not our norm as a



community.

- \* There's no shame in having HIV!
- \* If you are aware of someone living with HIV, don't tell other people, unless you know it's OK with the person.
- \* Support your brothers, those living with HIV, those who don't have HIV, and those who may be unaware of their HIV status.

5) **Create materials for men living with HIV:** Support men living with HIV to get into and stay in care and

take their medications every single day. This will help them stay healthy and reduce their chances of spreading HIV to others. In addition, some materials (and posters hung in the project space) can promote regular doctor's visits and maintaining medications.

## TOGETHER, CREATING COMMUNITIES FOR HEALTH



Download the MP Manual at [mpowerment.org](http://mpowerment.org). It's full of content from projects across the country. It discusses how MP can be used to motivate men to know their status.



Mpowerment.org features brief, 10-minute audio slide shows. We have videos specifically for executive directors, funders, and supervisors. Watch them and let us know what you think.


[mpowerment.org](http://mpowerment.org)  
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Center for AIDS Prevention Studies  
 University of California San Francisco  
 550 16th Street | 3rd Floor  
 San Francisco, CA 94158

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**415.476.6326**