

Public Health Management Corporation

Annual Progress Report: 2010 Formula Grant

Reporting Period

January 1, 2011 – June 30, 2011

Formula Grant Overview

The Public Health Management Corporation received \$17,081 in formula funds for the grant award period January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2012. Accomplishments for the reporting period are described below.

Research Project 1: Project Title and Purpose

Assessment of Health Needs of LGBT Older Adults in Philadelphia - Sexual minority older adults face barriers to health care in addition to those faced by older adults who are not sexual minorities. These barriers may include homophobia, lack of appropriate places to receive care and difficulties because partner relationships are not legally recognized. However, there are no local research studies identifying and documenting these barriers. In addition, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) populations are at increased risk for chronic conditions due to high rates of tobacco and alcohol use, among other factors. The proposed project will explore the health needs and barriers faced by sexual minority older adults in the Philadelphia region and will present research findings to inform policy decisions and the delivery of services.

Anticipated Duration of Project

1/1/2011 – 12/31/2012

Project Overview

The project will explore the health needs and barriers faced by sexual minority older adults in the Philadelphia region. The specific aims of the project are to:

1. Examine health care services currently accessed by LGBT older adults in Philadelphia, including care for chronic illnesses, preventive care, screenings, and mental and behavioral health care. We will compare the services received by sexual minority older adults to those received by older adults in the general population.
2. Document barriers to care, including homophobia and racial discrimination, financial concerns, legal barriers and lack of appropriate health care providers.
3. Explore LGBT older adults' concerns and plans for the future, including health care and long term care, housing, and end-of-life decisions.

4. Assess differences in these experiences and concerns by age (55 – 64 vs. 65 and over), race/ethnicity, and for women who have sex with women (WSW), men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender individuals.

We will collect information from LGBT persons age 55 and older using focus groups and a structured survey. Although the usual definition of older adults is persons 65 and over, in this study we will include persons ages 55 to 64 as well, in order to compare the experience and concerns of those along the older adult age spectrum. In Phase I, we will collect qualitative data from LGBT older adults about their current access to health care and their concerns and plans for the future. During Phase II, we will develop a short survey instrument based on the focus group results. We will collect data from a sample of approximately 250 LGBT older adults recruited at a variety of agencies and organizations, as well as on the Internet.

Principal Investigator

Jennifer L. Lauby, MA, PhD
Senior Research Scientist
Public Health Management Corporation
260 S. Broad Street, 18th floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Other Participating Researchers

Lee Carson, Heather Batson – employed by Public Health Management Corporation

Expected Research Outcomes and Benefits

The study will identify gaps in current health services provided to LGBT older adults, and will assess barriers to care that may prevent these older adults from accessing needed services. The project's research questions and data collection strategies will be developed with input from a working group including members of the target population and service providers. This working group will also assist in the development of a policy brief based on the results of the research and will draft a plan for disseminating the policy brief and research results. The project's research findings will be useful for planning by Philadelphia's Department of Public Health and other public agencies as well as for improving services at community-based organizations that serve LGBT and older adult populations.

Summary of Research Completed

Work on this project began in April, due to delays in receiving final grant approval. The first phase of the project is devoted to the collection and analysis of qualitative data to inform the survey to be conducted in phase two. Tasks completed by the end of June 2011 include identifying and meeting with the project's Community Advisory Board, finalizing data collection instruments for focus groups and in-depth interviews and the recruitment of study participants. These activities are described in detail below.

To ensure that the project's research questions and results reflect the needs of both the target

populations and providers who serve older adults, the project team has identified key members of the LGBT community and representatives from service providers to participate in an advisory board. The board currently has 18 members and meets monthly. In the first three meetings, the board has given feedback on the content of the focus group guide and qualitative interview, as well as provided detailed suggestions for recruiting a range of participants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and from different neighborhoods in the city.

The project team, including two student summer interns, has worked on developing comprehensive data collection instruments for focus groups and interviews. This involved reviewing previous research on health and service needs of older adults in general and LGBT older adults in particular. These previous studies have yielded a list of important topics to cover, as well as specific measures that we have adapted for use in our instrument. As mentioned above, the instrument drafts were reviewed by the Community Advisory Board and their suggestions were incorporated into the final instruments.

Recruitment of study participants is an important and time-consuming task. Older LGBT adults are often more closeted and less likely to participate in LGBT organizations than younger people. The project team has worked on several efforts to let the population know about the project and to use social networks to recruit participants. Staff has contributed to two articles in the *Philadelphia Gay News* to let people know how to volunteer to participate. Members of the advisory board, including representatives from the Philadelphia Corporation on Aging, have included our project in their electronic newsletters. We have also held two open house events that were attended by over 40 persons from our target population. At these meetings, we introduced the goals and objectives of the project and asked attendees to give feedback on our research topics as well as volunteer to participate in focus groups and interviews. Persons recruited through these efforts will be invited to focus groups and interviews to be held in August and September.