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The Red Carpet Program

Improving Linkage to Care and Optimizing Early Retention of Adolescents with Newly Identified HIV Infection in Homa Bay County, Kenya

Background

In Kenya, 30% of all new HIV infections occur among youths aged 15-24 years. Poor linkage to and retention in HIV care, high loss to follow-up between testing and initiation of antiretroviral treatment (ART), and poor treatment adherence are contributing factors to AIDS now being the leading cause of death and morbidity among Kenyan adolescents and young adults (in 2014, 9,720 youths ages 15-24 died of AIDS-related causes in Kenya).¹ The Kenyan Ministry of Health has responded by prioritizing adolescent health issues and has launched a National Adolescent Package of Care to strengthen adolescent-friendly care at all levels of the health system.

According to the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation's Kenya program (EGPAF-Kenya) data in Homa Bay County, adolescents have a HIV-positivity rates of 2.9%, with girls ages 15 to <20 years at 5.1%. Current strategies seem to be failing to successfully link and retain many of these youths living with HIV to sustained treatment. To address this crisis, EGPAF-Kenya is implementing the Red Carpet Program, a concept adapted from a successful Washington D.C.-based program of the same name.²

A one-year renewable award (initial year runs from January–December 2016) from ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action for Adolescents Fund, will allow EGPAF-Kenya to implement the Red Carpet program in Homa Bay. The overarching goal in Kenya is to improve the long-term health outcomes of adolescents (age 15-19) and young adults (age 19-21) living with HIV in Homa Bay County, through implementation of youth-specific comprehensive HIV testing, care, treatment and psychosocial support activities at the facility- and community-level. The program aims to join forces of health clinics and community health advocates to strengthen the meaningful involvement of adolescents and young adults in their own HIV prevention, care and treatment programs, increase the capacity of health care workers in provision of adolescent and youth-friendly HIV services and optimize early linkage and retention in HIV care and treatment while enhancing psychosocial support for newly identified youths living with HIV.

Objectives

The Red Carpet Program in Kenya is working towards the following objectives:

1. Increasing the number of adolescents with access to HIV testing services
2. Increasing the proportion of newly identified adolescents living with HIV who are linked to care
3. Increasing the proportion of newly identified adolescents living with HIV who attend their first, second, and third HIV care and treatment appointments
4. Increasing the number of HIV-positive adolescents who are retained in treatment and virally suppressed
5. Strengthening adolescents' meaningful involvement in their own HIV prevention, care, and treatment routines through the formation of Adolescent and Youth Peer Advisory Groups at the County- and sub-County levels
6. Increasing the capacity of health care workers at supported facilities to provide adolescent-friendly services, optimize linkages to care and early retention support, and enhance psychosocial support (PSS) to mitigate issues of stigma and discrimination, which can act as barriers to treatment and retention

Monitoring Program Success

To evaluate progress toward these objectives, the following key performance indicators and related targets will be monitored:

Table 1: Key performance indicators and year one targets

Indicator	Year one Target
Proportion of adolescents and young adults tested for HIV who receive results	30,000 adolescents
Proportion of adolescents and young adults identified as HIV-positive	TBD
Proportion of newly identified HIV-positive adolescents who have been linked to care within 1, 2, 3 and >3 months after testing	90% of HIV-positive youths identified
Proportion of HIV-positive adolescents who have attended initial appointments for HIV care	90% of HIV-positive youths identified
Number of health workers with increased capacity to provide adolescent-friendly services	200
Proportion of HIV-positive adolescents linked to and transitioned to identified PSS groups	90% of HIV-positive youths identified
Number of health facilities established/supported providing comprehensive adolescent and youth friendly health services, per Red Carpet guidance	50 Red Carpet health facilities
Percentage of adolescents on ART who are virally suppressed	90% of HIV-positive youths identified

Immediate Actions

For the first year of the project, EGPAF-Kenya, in collaboration with the Kenyan Ministry of Health, will engage in several priority activities to support the goal and objectives of the Red Carpet Program, including:

- Collect baseline data, including new and routine adolescent and young adult HIV indicators, in six sub-counties of Homa Bay;
- Identify 50 high-volume facilities and create separate adolescent/youth facility area within each;
- Review and adapt existing facility- and community-based health training materials, standard operating procedures, and curricula to scale up adolescent-friendly services at 50 supported sites;
- Identify and train adolescent and youth peer advisory group leaders and school-based adolescent/youth advocates;
- Finalize job aids and patient education materials on and around adolescents living with HIV;
- Train health workers at program-supported facilities to provide adolescent-friendly service delivery, optimize linkages and early retention
- Identify and train peer educators to lead PSS groups; and
- Sensitize community and education sector leaders on the program to ensure their support to youths living with HIV to adhere to treatment.

References

- ¹ Kenya National AIDS Control Council. Kenya's Fast-track Plan to End HIV and AIDS Among Adolescents and Young People. September 2015. Accessed on June 15th, 2016. http://www.nacc.or.ke/images/documents/Kenya_Fast_Tack_Plan_to_End_Adolescents_AIDS_and_Young_People.pdf
- ² Olejemeh, C.; Denson, A.; Frison, L.; Freehill, G.; & Pappas, G. Treatment is prevention: Enhanced Entry into HIV care: The RED Carpet Strategy in the District of Columbia, USA. Poster presented at the International AIDS Society Conference, Washington, D.C. 2012.

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