

## Transgender Life Care (TLC) Project

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**Project Description:** The primary goals of the TLC program are to provide enhanced gender- and culturally-appropriate mental health services (individual counseling and support groups) for both male-to-female and female-to-male transgenders in San Francisco. CAPS/UCSF is collaborating with the Castro Mission Health Center (CMHC), City DPH. The project has been providing individual counseling by a psychiatrist and a professional counselor, as well as weekly support groups. The counseling program has been integrated with existing primary health care, HIV/AIDS services, and substance abuse treatment programs at CMHC. The support group program has been offered at a project office, Health Studies for People of Color, CAPS, which is located in the targeted transgender community.

**Significance:** Due to a complex network of socioeconomic and cultural forces, the MTF transgender community is highly vulnerable to a host of psychological problems—including depression, affective disorders, post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), alienation, and suicide attempt and ideation—in addition to multiple health problems—including drug and alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, and STDs. There are currently only 2 publicly funded primary health clinics in San Francisco that have programs specific to transgenders; however, neither currently provides expanded mental health services for this population. Most primary health service providers lack the capacity to understand and treat the complex array of mental health issues facing this community, including the effects of hormones on physical and mental health, gender confirmation procedures, and daily living struggles associated with being transgender, in addition to mental health, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS problems common in this community.

**Interesting Findings:** TLC has had a phenomenal start up and there is every indication that need for services may outpace the ability of the project to provide those services. A Marriage and Family Therapist expert on transgender mental health joined the project in October of 2002, to date 76 unduplicated transgender men and women have been enrolled in the TLC project. Support groups that are specific to MTF or FTM transgenders have been implemented, including one Spanish language support group. Half of the participants receive primary medical care at the Castro Mission Health Center while the other half receive at the Tom Waddell Health Center. Most participants have expressed a desire to participate in both the support groups and therapy indicating the high level of unmet mental health service need.

**Project Ending Date:** June 2004

**Project Recruitment Dates:** Now until May 1, 2004