



Stigma and Discrimination

“In many ways the stigma of HIV/AIDS has had an even wider reach and a greater effect than the virus itself.” -An Epidemic of Stigma and Discrimination Info Sheet, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Clinic

Introduction

Stigma and discrimination have touched all aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Canada and around the world. Stigma and discrimination not only lead to reduced quality of life and health for those who endure it, but also cause the spread of HIV to increase. HIV related stigma and discrimination are rooted in fear of disease, fear of poverty, as well as in already existing prejudices such as racism, homophobia, sexism, classism etc. Fear of stigma and discrimination can cause people: not to get tested for HIV or start treatment, not to talk about the facts about HIV/AIDS, and not to properly protect themselves. In this environment HIV/AIDS creeps around hidden doing damage without being adequately addressed.

Definitions

Stigma: “Stigma is a powerful and discrediting social label that radically changes the way individuals view themselves and are viewed as persons. People who are stigmatized are usually considered deviant or shameful, and as a result are shunned, discredited, rejected, or penalized.” –Stigma and Discrimination: Definitions and Concepts Info Sheet (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Clinic)

Discrimination:

“Discrimination means unfair treatment because of your ancestry, ethnic origin, colour, race, religion, citizenship, place of origin, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), disability (including mental and physical disabilities), age, sexual orientation (two spirited) as well as family or marital status (opposite or same sex partners).–the Human Rights Commission

“Treatment or consideration based on class or category rather than individual merit; partiality or prejudice” -The Free Dictionary (Online)

Statistics

Statistics from the Public Health Agency of Canada www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php

- In a recent survey, almost 30% of Canadians said they would not be comfortable working in an office with someone with HIV.
- In the same study 43% of parents said they would be uncomfortable having their child attend school where one of the students had HIV.

Reflections

These words are the beginning of a collection that will continue to grow and will value the lived experiences of those living with HIV/AIDS in York Region.

Stained

*Ah *#%*!*

It went right through...

You think anyone will notice?

Can you tell just by looking?

I would put something over top, but I have nothing else to wear.

Who am I kidding I can't go out like this...

I know someone will notice...

Then I'll be singled out having everyone look at me as if I was some dirty rag...

They'll think, I guess no one taught him how to launder properly or he definitely doesn't care about his appearance.

Oh! Watch out, get back!

Don't come any closer,

I don't want to get it on you!

Wash it out?

No matter how hard I scrub, it just doesn't want to come out.

Trust me if I could I would, I've tried it's impossible!

I guess I'm stuck with it there.

Oh, don't worry about me, you go on ahead. Please, I insist.

Tell them I'm sorry I couldn't make it, perhaps another time...

- Anonymous

Resources

The AIDS Committee of York Region

Stigma and Discrimination Workshop, Speakers Bureau

www.acyr.org

Document: A Plan of Action for Canada to Reduce HIV/AIDS related Stigma and Discrimination

<http://www.aidslaw.ca/publications/interfaces/downloadFile.php?ref=48>

Document: Canada Takes Action on HIV/AIDS (2005-2010)

www.leadingtogether.ca

UNAIDS

<http://www.unaids.org/en/PolicyAndPractice/StigmaDiscrim/default.asp>

HIV/AIDS Anti-Stigma Initiative

<http://www.hivaidstigma.org>

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE)

www.catie.ca

HIV/AIDS and Poverty

www.hivandpoverty.ca