



Boston University School of Social Work  
Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health

**For Immediate Release:**

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**National Research Project Bundles Interventions to Make More Aggressive Gains  
in Black Women's Health**

*Twelve sites awarded millions to bundle and scale HIV interventions across the country.*

LOWELL, MA – March 25, 2021 – The University of Massachusetts Lowell, in collaboration with AIDS United, and the Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health (CISWH) at Boston University's School of Social Work (BUSSW), have been tapped to lead a national, first-of-its-kind project to evaluate and disseminate bundled evidence-informed and trauma-informed interventions for Black women with HIV.

This work is particularly timely:

- It comes on the heels of a year defined by race-based inequities in healthcare, political and social unrest, and increased calls for racial and social justice.
- It supports key federal health initiatives, such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) [Ending the HIV Epidemic \(EHE\)](#) as well as the [Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\) Strategy to Address Intimate Partner Violence](#).
- It includes a bundled intervention approach in recognition that multi-pronged strategies may more effectively address socio-cultural health determinants, expand utilization of services, and ultimately improve health outcomes for Black women.

According to the [CDC](#), Black women represent 57% of all new HIV diagnoses among women. Black women also disproportionately experience violence, including intimate partner violence, at higher rates than other women, according to the [Institute for Women's Policy Research](#).

“COVID-19 shined a light on health disparities in our country and the disproportionate burden in Black communities,” says Serena Rajabiun, principal investigator, UMass Lowell. “In the HIV field, we have long known this to be true. That is why funding for projects like this are so critical and why we need to keep researching innovative interventions to ensure equitable access, treatment, and outcomes for Black women.”

Through the *Black Women First* initiative, grant recipients implement at least two bundled interventions, which may include such focus areas as:

- Enhanced patient navigation, case management or peer engagement
- Red Carpet Care experience to address barriers to HIV care
- Stigma reduction
- Use of Trauma Informed Care
- Self-efficacy, health literacy and resiliency
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), sexual violence or other behavioral needs

Valerie Rochester, chief program officer at AIDS United adds, “The importance of this initiative cannot be understated. Black women do not live single issue lives where health issues can be addressed using a cookie-cutter approach. The bundled intervention approach offers a unique opportunity to provide a range of proven strategies to support Black women, while including Black women in all aspects of this project from inception, execution, evaluation, and dissemination.”

This work is funded by the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health Minority HIV/AIDS Fund (MHAF) and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), HIV/AIDS Bureau, Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Part F: Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS) and includes 12 grant recipients across the country:

- Abounding Prosperity, Inc. in Dallas, TX
- AccessMatters in Philadelphia, PA
- AIDS Care Group in Chester, PA
- AIDS Foundation of Chicago in Chicago, IL
- AIDS Service Center of Lower Manhattan in New York, NY
- City of Philadelphia in Philadelphia, PA
- Grady Health System in Atlanta, GA
- Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies in New Orleans, LA
- Positive Impact Health Centers in Atlanta, GA
- Quality Comprehensive Health Center in Charlotte, NC
- UCSF Women’s HIV Program in San Francisco, CA
- Volunteers of America, SE Louisiana in New Orleans, LA

UMass Lowell and CISWH lead the project’s evaluation activities, while AIDS United, in collaboration with the Black Women’s Health Imperative, will provide implementation expertise and technical assistance for the 12 grant recipient sites.

“When we look at the interventions,” says Rajabiun “not only will we be evaluating ‘how they work,’ we’ll also be looking at how to make them as turn-key as possible in order to get them into communities across the country that need them most and who serve at the frontlines of the HIV epidemic.”

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**About University of Massachusetts, Lowell (UML):**

[UMass Lowell](#) is a national research university offering its more than 18,000 students bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in business, education, engineering, fine arts, health, humanities, sciences and social sciences. UML's Center for Population Health's mission and vision is to establish long-term interventions in diverse populations, that effectively reduce the prevalence of diseases and improve overall quality of health and well-being.

**About AIDS United:**

AIDS United has the singular mission of ending the HIV epidemic the United States through strategic grant-making, capacity building, and policy and advocacy. AIDS United bridges policy with grant-making and capacity building; linking the world of HIV service and community-based organizations with the public health, medical, advocacy and social justice communities to respond to the domestic HIV epidemic. Learn more about AIDS United [here](#).

**About the Center for Innovation in Social Work & Health at BUSSW**

CISWH is dedicated to expanding the impact of social work in health care and public health in order to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable populations nationally and globally. CISWH seeks to improve outcomes, patient experience, and population health; reduce costs; and promote health equity and social justice. The Center supports social work leadership in health through cross-sector collaboration with public health, medicine, health economics, technology, and other relevant disciplines. The Center accomplishes its mission through research, community partnerships, policy development, and by providing technical assistance and educational opportunities. [Learn more here](#).