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Cultural Awareness Survey Program (CASP): An Innovative Assessment and Education Tool to Evaluate Elements of Stigma Impacting Care at Public Health HIV/STI Clinics

Background: Delivery of effective HIV prevention and care for stigmatized populations requires strong cultural sensitivity. In order to understand and improve cultural sensitivity practices at health department HIV/STI clinics in Tennessee (TN), the TN Department of Health developed the Cultural Awareness Survey Program (CASP).

Methods: In 2016 and 2018, three health departments expressed interest in participation, providing opportunities to assess cultural competency among clinic staff. Local volunteers, representative of priority HIV prevention and care populations (e.g., young men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender clients of color) were identified and trained (N=9) to evaluate cultural competency while receiving HIV/STI testing services in three health department clinics. Three volunteers visited each site, documenting experiences using a CASP Tool assessing 40 questions including healthcare interactions, sexual behavior assessment and risk modification counseling.

Results: Nursing staff were the primary contact, demonstrating moderate knowledge about gay, bisexual and transgender (GBT) terminology, and HIV resources. Opportunities for improvement included visibility of culturally diverse images, asking appropriate sexual history questions, and understanding the condom distribution process. HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) counseling and information was also not uniformly provided at one site (added to the

2018 survey). CASP facilitated site-specific recommendations, including action steps towards addressing barriers to care experienced by MSM and transgender clients, best practice for sexual histories, and implementation of PrEP training.

Conclusion: CASP may be used as a uniform tool to measure HIV/STI testing sites' cultural sensitivity, enabling tailored recommendations to address stigma impacting sexual healthcare at health department clinics.