

## AIDS PROJECT WORCESTER

Media Advisory  
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**KEVIN CRANSTON, DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE,  
MASS. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH,  
TO SPEAK AT MAJOR GRANT ANNOUNCEMENT  
FOR WOMEN'S HIV/SEXUAL VIOLENCE INITIATIVE**

Kevin Cranston, Director, Bureau of Infectious Disease, Mass. Department of Public Health, will be the keynote speaker at the announcement of a major grant from The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts to AIDS Project Worcester that will fund the implementation phase of the Women's HIV/Sexual Violence Initiative. Mr. Cranston will speak about the impact of pending budget cuts on state programs and the significance of foundations stepping forward to identify emerging health needs and supporting evidence-based strategies to address these needs.

**Fact:** Central Massachusetts and the City of Worcester lead the state in the percentage of women diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, most of whom are women of color. The Women's HIV/Sexual Violence Initiative was developed to understand and address the many and complex causes behind this fact.

**WHEN:** Monday, February 2, 5:30 pm

**WHERE:** AIDS Project Worcester, 85 Green St., Training Room

**WHO:** Kevin Cranston, Director, Bureau of Infectious Disease, Mass. Department Public Health  
Janice B. Yost, Ed.D., President and CEO, The Health Foundation of Central Mass.  
Joe McKee, Executive Director AIDS Project Worcester  
Akua, a participant in the Women's HIV/Sexual Violence Initiative

Note: Director Cranston will be available for photo opportunities and questions. To schedule a private interview with Akua, a participant in The Women's Initiative, who is willing to speak about her experiences, contact Martha Akstin at 508.755.3773, ext. 18, or email [makstin@aidspprojectworcester.org](mailto:makstin@aidspprojectworcester.org) to set up an appointment before or after the event.

**BACKGROUND:** Since 1987, **AIDS Project Worcester** has been the leading provider of comprehensive services in Central Massachusetts to support persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. **The Women's HIV/Sexual Violence Initiative** was developed as the agency realized the increasing number of women, especially minority women, at risk for HIV/AIDS and sexual violence. The goals of this project include increasing the identification of undiagnosed cases of HIV/AIDS; increasing the identification of women with histories of sexual violence; increasing access to medical care and treatment for women newly diagnosed with HIV/ADS; and decreasing the barriers for women to learn their HIV status and attendant risk factors. During the pilot year, more than 450 women were screened and 62 were enrolled in the program.

The Women's Initiative is a partnership between AIDS Project Worcester and the American Red Cross of Central Massachusetts, in collaboration with The Family Health Center of Worcester, The Rape Crisis Center of Central Massachusetts, the YWCA Daybreak Program, and Pernet Family Health Service.

**The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts** funded the planning and pilot phases for the Women's HIV/Sexual Violence Initiative, and will announce its commitment to fund the implementation phase. The mission of The Foundation is to use its resources to improve the health of those who live or work in Central Massachusetts, with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations and unmet needs.