Positive Action grants focus on social and digital media needs of an underserved population, young men who have sex with men (MSM) in the U.S.

Research Triangle Park, NC, Nov. 02 /CSRwire/ - ViiV Healthcare today announced it will award grants to five organizations across the country as part of the Positive Action MSM Youth Engagement Initiative. These grants focus on youth-led social and digital communications solutions to help increase sexual health knowledge, reduce stigma and link young MSM to care, aligned with their unique needs and in a safe environment. Grant awardees are from Massachusetts, California, New York, Illinois and South Carolina.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, young gay and bisexual men remain a population at high risk, accounting for 72 percent of new HIV infections among all persons aged 13–24, and 30 percent of new infections among all gay and bisexual men (2010). [i]
This issue was highlighted as a main focus in the White House's "National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States: Updated to 2020." The strategy pointed specifically to digital solutions as a way to "deepen the impact of our efforts to provide information and promote HIV testing as well as to help link and retain individuals in care." [ii]

"There is a tremendous need for education on HIV and on the support services within this community. However, to reach young MSM, we have to think and communicate differently," said Cindy Watson, Positive Action MSM Youth Engagement Initiative committee member. "The innovative ideas behind these initial programs will continue to pave the way for new thinking and future applications that may help us expand our reach across the entire continuum of HIV care."

ViiV Healthcare will fund the following five programs from across the country that plan to reach young MSM through a variety of communications channels, including online videos, mobile apps, interactive web-based solutions, dating websites and text programs. Each grantee will receive up to $50,000 per year for two years.

- Hispanic Black Gay Coalition : **Virtual Health Education & Empowerment Project** (Boston, MA)

- Latino Commission on AIDS : **LEAD (Leadership, Empowerment, Action and Diffusion) Program** (New York, NY)
- Puerto Rican Cultural Center : **Generation L** (Chicago, IL)
- Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services : **Engayge Project** (Columbia, SC)
- Realistic Education in Action Coalition to Foster Health : **CreatHIVity Project** (Los Angeles, CA)

“At ViiV, we are committed to fostering connections within the HIV community, connections that are based on insights from the people living with HIV and ones that help populations most disproportionately impacted by the virus,” said Michael N. Joyner, director of Positive Action and patient advocacy at ViiV Healthcare. “The need has never been greater to reach this younger generation. We believe these programs will ultimately help young MSM to communicate critical information through innovative approaches that are a natural fit with their daily lives.”

ViiV Healthcare’s Positive Action MSM Youth Engagement Initiative considers proposals that involve MSM aged 18–29, in collaboration with nonprofit sexual health organizations or AIDS service organizations (ASOs), to develop their own creative and digitally based strategies that may increase sexual health knowledge within their own communities.

The Positive Action MSM Youth Engagement Initiative is a U.S.-focused project of ViiV Healthcare’s broader Positive Action MSM and Transgender Programme, a global programme dedicated to supporting vulnerable communities and minimizing the stigma and discrimination they face on a daily basis due to sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and/or HIV status.

About ViiV Healthcare's Positive Action Programme

Positive Action was created in 1992 as the first pharmaceutical company programme to support communities affected by HIV and AIDS. ViiV Healthcare is proud to continue the Positive Action programme and its valuable work with these communities. Positive Action works with those communities most vulnerable to HIV disease, including youth, girls and women, sex workers, gay men, men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender people, injecting drug users (IDU), the homeless and the incarcerated. Our projects range across education, prevention, care and treatment-related activity such as treatment literacy and community/clinical engagement.

For more information about Positive Action, please visit: http://www.viivhealthcare.com/community-partnerships/the-viiv-healthcare-effect.aspx

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About ViiV Healthcare

ViiV Healthcare is a global specialist HIV company established in November 2009 by GlaxoSmithKline (LSE: GSK) and Pfizer (NYSE: PFE) dedicated to delivering advances in treatment and care for people living with HIV. Shionogi joined in October 2012. The company's aim is to take a deeper and broader interest in HIV/AIDS than any company has done before and take a new approach to deliver effective and new HIV medicines as well as support communities affected by HIV. For more information on the company, its management, portfolio, pipeline and commitment, please visit www.viivhealthcare.com .

[i] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV Among Gay and Bisexual Men. Updated August 12, 2015. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/msm .

[ii] The White House. National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States: Updated to 2020. Released July 30, 2015. Available at: https://www.aids.gov/federal-resources/national-hiv-aids-strategy/nhas-update.pdf .