

AIDS ALERT ** AIDS ALERT **

SAVE THE HIV/STD PEER EDUCATION PROGRAM AT THE CALIFORNIA MEN'S PRISON HOSPITAL!

DEMAND THAT DIRECTOR SCOTT COZZA BE REINSTATED!

On November 2, 1995, Dr. Joe Bick, Chief Medical Officer of the HIV Unit, at the California Medical Facility (CMF) (for men prisoners) in Vacaville, suspended the HIV/STD Peer Education Program. Dr. Bick also fired Scott Cozza, a California Department of Corrections (CDoC) employee from the program and removed him from the HIV Unit.

WHAT WAS SCOTT COZZA'S CRIME?

On November 1, all prisoners at CMF were scheduled for mandatory flu shots. However, only the men in the HIV Unit were locked down. Scott felt that the men had a right to know about the dangers of flu shots to severely immunocompromised individuals (over 200 men prisoners have an AIDS diagnosis at CMF). Scott distributed public health information from Project Inform. This action was too much for Dr. Bick who immediately shut down the peer education program. Dr. Bick also removed Scott from his work on the HIV Unit, claiming that Scott's actions constituted a security breach. The program remains closed.

Peer education is recognized as the most effective form of HIV/AIDS education. For the past three years, Scott has won national and international acclaim for the program at CMF. He is well-respected by prisoners and staff. The CDoC purports to be replicating CMF's peer education program at other prisons around the state.

Prisoners need access to the same public health information and HIV/AIDS educational materials as their counterparts do on the outside. Until the HIV/STD Peer Education Program is resumed, prisoners lives are in jeopardy. If the program is restarted with Scott's participation, it will lose its effectiveness with the HIV+ prisoner population.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Letters and faxes to (CDoC) Director James Gomez and Chief Medical Officer Nadim Khoury are urgently needed to save the HIV/STD Peer Education Program. Copies of all letters should be sent to members of Director Gomez's AIDS Advisory Committee, sympathetic state legislators and the media. Attached is a sample letter.