



Making Sex a Crime and Spit a Deadly Weapon: The Criminal Treatment of HIV

First National Dialogue on HIV Criminalization Convening in Washington, DC, July 20, 2012

For Immediate Release

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New York, July 19, 2012 – The Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP) is hosting a day-long convening for the Positive Justice Project (PJP), a diverse national network of people living with HIV and their advocates. The Convening will take place just prior to the 2012 International AIDS Conference, on **Friday, July 20, 2012, from 9:30am to 5:30pm, at The Renaissance Hotel in Washington, D.C.** The event is the first cross-disciplinary, full-day meeting of partner organizations and individuals working to end HIV criminalization.

Thirty-four U.S states and territories have laws criminalizing HIV “exposure” (including through risk-free conduct such as spitting and biting) or nondisclosure of an individual’s HIV status. Medical and public health experts have long dismissed the risk of HIV transmission through spitting or biting as near zero--too small even to be measured. Yet hundreds of HIV-positive individuals across the country have faced criminal charges and long sentences on the basis of their HIV status for no-risk conduct or consensual adult sex.

The Convening is the first cross-disciplinary, full-day forum for people living with HIV, medical and public health professionals, community organizers, advocates, attorneys, ex-offenders, sex workers and social scientists to share information on ending HIV criminalization. It will provide an opportunity to discuss how individuals from a range of backgrounds experience and respond to HIV criminalization across the country.

Dr. Mandeep Dhaliwal, UNDP Cluster Leader on Human Rights and Gender, is the opening speaker. Dhaliwal oversaw the recent report of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, representing 18 months of investigation, convening, comment solicitation and review of scientific literature, and addressing the role of the law around the world in both protecting and punishing people living with HIV. At this event, she will comment on the report, released last week, and speak about why criminalization matters. The Convening will also feature presentations and panel discussions by a number of key stakeholders in the movement to end HIV criminalization.

The CHLP is a national legal and policy resource and strategy center for people with HIV and their advocates. It staffs and coordinates the PJP, bringing together more than a hundred partner organizations to collaborate on addressing HIV criminalization and discrimination in the United States. For more information on the PJP and HIV criminalization, visit: <http://hivlawandpolicy.org/public/initiatives/positivejusticeproject>.

The convening is sponsored in part by the ABA’s HIV Coordinating Committee and the work of the PJP has been made possible by generous support from the M.A.C. AIDS Fund, the Elton John AIDS Foundation, Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS the John M. Lloyd Foundation and the Henry van Ameringen Foundation.