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## Local groups awarded millions for AIDS work

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A consortium of Hartford-based community groups is being awarded a new \$2.5 million federal grant to continue research and educational programs intended to stop the spread of AIDS in the city.

The consortium, called Project Cope, used a comparable grant to interview and work with hundreds of drug abusers in a four-year study of culturally sensitive AIDS education. The new money, awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, will be used to continue the consortium's work for the next five years.

Organizers, armed with past findings, say they now hope to involve at least 2,000 people with AIDS or at risk of contracting the disease in group educational sessions and new research into AIDS prevention and intervention.

Intravenous drug abusers and people who sell sex for money or drugs will be targeted for participation in the project, which will be run through the Urban League, the Hispanic Health Council, Latinos/Latinas Contra SIDA and the Hartford Dispensary. These groups, together with the Institute for Community Research and the Hartford Health Department, are consortium members.

Health and drug rehabilitation services for the poor, sick and addicted are overburdened. But organizers hope to help consolidate a network of support services and refer people to agencies that can help them with medical, housing and legal problems, said project director Margaret Weeks.

"There are very limited services available. We don't want to make

promises we can't keep. We are just trying to the degree we can, to get access" for participants to the services, she said.

While continuing its research into how AIDS is spread, the consortium is also pursuing grants that could help provide more direct services, she said.

Health Department Director Mark Mitchell said the need for more direct services exists. But he also said Project Cope had been making a contribution with its research.

"I'm interested in research to help us get information we can't get any other way," he said.

"There are some things Project Cope is doing to help us in planning AIDS prevention," he said.

When Project Cope released the results of its extensive study last year, it drew criticism from those who said the money would have been better spent in care for people with AIDS. But the consortium also attracted praise from sponsors in the federal government who said Project Cope was breaking new ground in uniting diverse community-based health and research groups to fight AIDS in culturally sensitive ways.