Alliance for Community Wellness, a service of HIVAlliance, based in Eugene, Oregon, is launching Prime Peer Program, in collaboration with Lane County Health and Human Services, and with funding from the State of Oregon.

Prime Peer Program is a response to the continuing challenges of the substance overdose epidemic, and aims to mitigate the negative effects of substance use by actively and proactively engaging people who are at risk of substance overdose but are not at readiness to pursue substance use treatment. Peer services is a proven method of fostering readiness for treatment while reducing harm of ongoing substance use, thus increasing the likelihood of recovery and leading to better health outcomes.

In Prime Peer Program, certified Peer Support Specialists—who share the life histories of our clients—will offer nonjudgmental, harm-reduction services to people who have been identified. Clients will be recruited through direct outreach in the community, and with linkage to and co-location at local institutions who will identify potential clients among those who have been taken to an Emergency Department, have been hospitalized, or are being released from detention or imprisonment.

Peer Services will include:

- moral support, role-modeling, problem-solving, and advocacy
- referrals to and assistance accessing community resources, care coordination, and healthcare services
- STI prevention services, such as syringe exchange and education
- overdose prevention supplies, such as naloxone and fentanyl testing strips
- rides and other practical assistance as resources allow
- referral and linkage to substance use treatment, if client is ready and willing

Prime Peer Program will be working through a Local Coordinating Committee to engage with health care providers, community groups and coalitions, stakeholders, policymakers, supporters, and community influencers, to establish channels of direct outreach and referrals, and to help identify and meet emerging community needs.

Since 2016, Alliance for Community Wellness pursued HIVAlliance’s mission of preventing sexually transmitted infections by providing low-barrier healthcare services to vulnerable communities. Prime Peer Program continues our dedication to serving people whose substance use places them at greater risk of harm, through collaboration, innovation, and compassionate care.