

„Be my buddy“

How peer educators can support linkage to care and fight stigma

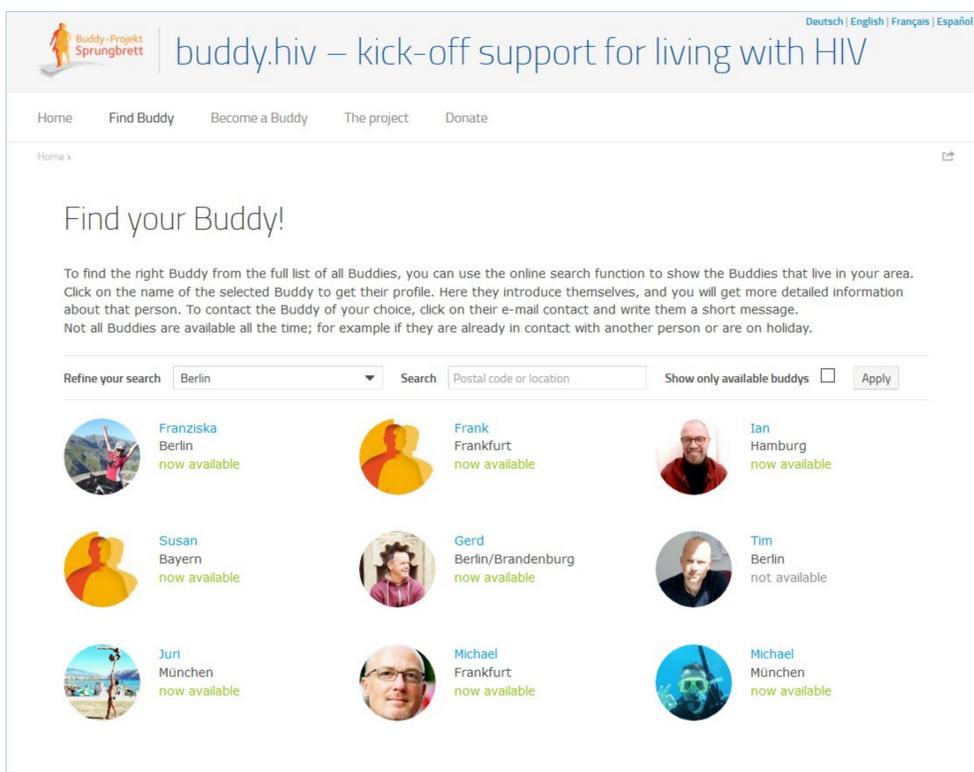
What offers do people who are confronted with a newly diagnosed HIV infection want?

How do we guide them in healthcare system?

In 2015 “Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe” started a **peer based Buddy-Project**. With this project, People who have recently been tested HIV-positive had the chance to choose a HIV-positive "buddy" as a **companion for the first steps after diagnosis**.

A lesson we learned: the project was better accepted when the buddies used **their own local networks** then if the project management did this work.

And an interesting side-effect came up: people who participated in the project **became committed multipliers and lobbyists** against HIV-stigmatization.



Methods

The buddies were trained in a **30hrs training program**. Even in these workshop they had to face their own internalized stigma (as far as concerned) and get basic knowledge how to empower people to **take care of your own affairs**. A **selection process** ensures that only these buddies are included to the project, which definitely had **fully completed the process of confrontation with their own HIV infection**. The project lead was to accompany the users on a same eye level in the frame of a personal encounter to overcome the inhibitions to professional advice.

Results

The project is evaluated quantitatively by using a feedback-tool to monitor the single contacts of the participants. The buddies are invited once a year for a support and supervision-workshop. This evaluation shows a very **high satisfaction of the project users**. But at all, the project did not reach a critical mass of participants.

	31.12.18	31.12.17	31.12.16	31.12.15
Annual users	80	75	54	64
First Contacts	63	63	54	64
Follow Up Users	17	12	25	28
Training-sessions	1	1	0	4
Trained Buddies	77	63	51	51

Conclusions

Peer-Projects develop their best effect if the peers have good resources in the background and are empowered **to take their own affairs into their own hands**.

Obviously **quantity does not seem to be the only indicator** to measure the success of peer-empowerment.

Recommendations

Working with peers can be a key to fight stigma. Peer contacts can be a bridge to test, treatment and healthcare.

The project itself has a lot of resources to assist other organizations to build up their own peer-project.

“Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe” - and more the involved volunteers - are willing to **share this knowledge**. They can also provide a **cooperation** within using the already existing web-page to expand the project to other European countries.

Want to know more about the project and the advantages of peer empowerment? See the web-page www.buddy.hiv or contact the project coordinator **Tim Vogler** +49 177 268 38 45 (info@timvogler.berlin)