AIDS ACTION to move to 131 Clarendon

Continued from page 1

to provide creative, effective and practical solutions and services to all those who have been affected by AIDS," Kessler said. "And our volunteers, those dedicated men and women who are the very backbone of this organization, have made it possible for AIDS ACTION to touch the lives — not of hundreds — but of thousands of people in virtually every segment of the population.

"We have been successful to be sure, but look at the numbers," he said.

"Every day, more cases of AIDS, ARC and HIV infection are being reported. Every day, more communities are being directly affected. And every day, more people are turning to AIDS ACTION to help them learn to live with AIDS.

"If we are to meet the challenges that lay before us — and there will be many — we must have the resources that will allow us to continue providing the high level of informed, compassionate, and professional care that has made AIDS ACTION a leader in the fight against AIDS in New England and a model for other AIDS organizations nationwide.

"The move to 131 Clarendon St. is an important — an essential — step in meeting that imperative."

The layout of the new space is the result of an intensive design process aimed at creating a facility that responds to current needs and provides for future growth.

Based on a collaborative effort among departmental directors, program managers, and other staff members and volunteers, the layout logically groups together related programs to facilitate more efficient communication and administration between departments.

The Client Services Department will occupy the third floor, which will feature private in-take rooms for interviewing individuals requesting services, offices for AIDS ACTION's 10 client advocates and two supervisors, the confidential client files, the Health Action Program, a reception area, and a staff lunch room accommodating up to 15 people.

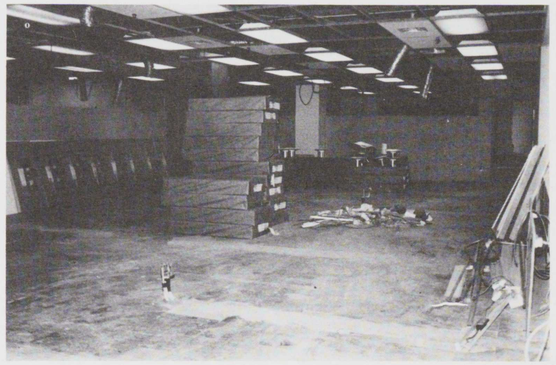
"The new space will be much more welcoming and comfortable for our clients," says Client Advocate Laurie Bloom. "Our current space is very stressful for clients as well as staff members. In some cases, five advocates share a single office.

"In addition, it is very difficult to find places to provide follow-up to our 600 clients or to interview the 40 to 50 new individuals who come to us for services every month.

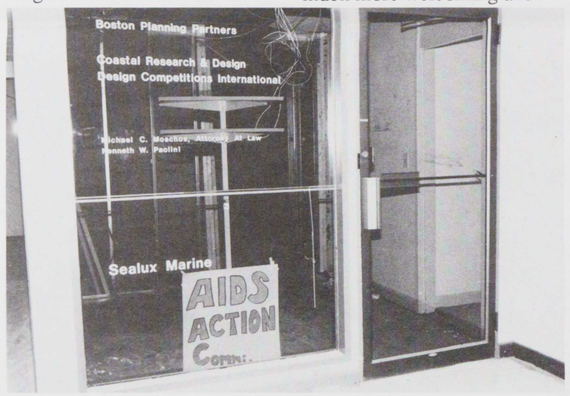
"The new space will allow advocates — whose caseloads average 60 to 75 clients — to have immediate access to private client meeting and in-take rooms. It also includes a client lounge which will be used for our Monday night dinners and provide a place where our clients can meet without being interrupted."

Clients frequently had to be displaced from the client lounge at 661 Boylston St. to make way for other meetings for which there was no other available space," Bloom says.

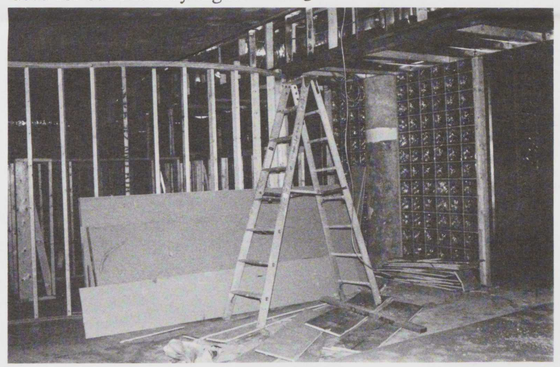
"We're very excited about the level of service we'll be able to provide in the new space," says Client Advocate Sandy Rittner. "The new offices will help significantly in reducing client anxiety and stress among staff members. The flexibility of the new offices also will make it possible for the department to grow to meet the needs of new



The fifth floor offices under construction. Photos by Ellen Shub.



This third floor entrance will serve the Client Services Dept.



Walls and glass brick will define work areas and offices on each of the three floors.

Flexible space to meet growth, change

Continued from page 4

groups affected by AIDS."

The main reception area for AIDS ACTION will be located on the fourth floor, along with the offices for the "Hotline," education, client support, and volunteer services departments, and a client library and lounge.

"The fourth floor will feature one medium-sized and two large conference rooms, " says Facilities Manager Paul Boisse, who joined AIDS ACTION in July to coordinate the renovation and move to the new facility.

"It also will contain a large volunteer workspace, which can be divided by folding walls," he says. "The flexibility of this room will provide meeting rooms for groups ranging in size from 20 to 100 people."

The move will be a boon to the Volunteer Services Department, says Volunteer Training Coordinator Mary Beth Borre, who says until recently she had to share a desk with a full-time volunteer as well as others who used the computer there.

"The new offices will be much more friendly, and our whole operation won't seem so 'temporary'," Borre says. "Volunteers will have access to a conference room as well as dedicated workspaces in our immediate area, where they will be able to leave work related to ongoing projects." Due to cramped quarters at 661 Boylston, volunteers have had to pack up their materials each time they left the office to make room for someone else.

"The new offices also provide rooms and much needed security for our audio-visual equipment and our confidential volunteer files."

Another feature of the space, Borre says, is a volunteer training library, which will house manuals, books, articles, and other important resources for training new volunteers.

The large, flexible volunteer workspace room also will make it possible for Volunteer Services open houses, orientations, continuing education programs, and weekend training sessions to be held at AIDS ACTION rather than at area churches and other places as was necessary in the past.

"We also will be next door to the "Buddies" Program and other departments with which we work regularly that now are located in a different building entirely," Borre says. "*And* we won't have to displace clients from the client lounge so that we can hold a meeting. Thankfully, that won't be the case anymore," she says.

The fifth floor at 131 Clarendon will house the executive and departmental directors' offices as well as additional education department offices and offices for the community services planning and the development and finance departments, says Facilities Manager Boisse.

As currently planned, the fifth floor also will feature four small and medium-sized conference rooms.

"Everything is moving on schedule for the October move," says Boisse, who has been conducting tours throughout August to acquaint volunteers and staff members with the new space.

Additional tours will take place throughout September, he says.

"The complete move will take place over the course of one weekend, " Boisse says.

"Telephone service and 'The Hotline' will continue throughout the move, and the normal operations of the organization will not be significantly interrupted."

Every department has appointed a staff liason for the move, Boisse says, to identify special needs or considerations for his or her department during the process.

In the meantime, Boisse is seeking volunteers to assist in the move, specifically to help pack and unpack boxes, to do inventory, and to assist in cleaning office furniture before the move.

AIDS ACTION also is seeking donations of office equipment and furniture for the new facility.

Volunteers interested in helping with the move are asked to contact Mary Beth Borre at 437-6200, ext. 265.

Continued on page 6

Two views from AIDS ACTION's new offices, looking toward the South End (top) and Back Bay.

Fourth Floor walls are readied for sheet rock and finishing. Construction is expected to be completed this month.