

World AIDS Day 2018: Progress, Challenges, and the Role of Local Health Departments

Information from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, November 20, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- World AIDS Day, observed annually on December 1, celebrates accomplishments in combating the disease, remembers those who have lost their lives, and refocuses efforts on what is still needed to end the epidemic. Advances in testing technologies and biomedical interventions have expanded and transformed the way we approach HIV prevention and care, but disparities remain. This year's World AIDS Day theme, "Know Your Status," aims to address this by encouraging people to get tested and engage in care. Local health departments are on the forefront of these efforts, working to address prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS. This update is provided by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), representing the nation's nearly 3,000 local health departments.

[Status of the Epidemic](#)

The annual number of new HIV infections has declined over the last decade. Still, more than 1.1 million people are estimated to be living with HIV in the U.S., and one in seven are unaware.

Progress in the HIV epidemic is uneven across populations and regions.

- o Black populations account for nearly half – 44% – of HIV diagnoses, despite representing just 12% of the U.S. population.

- o Men who have sex with men (MSM) remain most affected; however, white MSM saw a 10% decrease in HIV diagnoses, while black and Latino MSM have experienced increases of 4% and 14%, respectively. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis suggests that if current HIV diagnosis rates persist, one in two black MSM and one in four Latino MSM will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime.

- o Youth ages 13-24 make up 20% of all new HIV diagnoses.

- o Nearly one in ten new HIV diagnoses are among people who inject drugs, reflecting the severity of the opioid epidemic.

- o Southern states account for more than half of new HIV diagnoses and 44% of all people living with HIV, while making up 38% of the national population.

Medical and community-based interventions are making a difference.

- o Antiretroviral therapy (ART) significantly extends and improves the quality of life for people living with HIV, and there is now conclusive scientific evidence that people living with HIV who are on ART and virologically suppressed do not sexually transmit HIV.

- o Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), as well as post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), uptake is a critical intervention for decreasing the risk of HIV transmission.

The Role of Local Health Departments and NACCHO

Local health departments are key leaders in providing and assuring access to HIV prevention, care, and treatment for the communities they serve. As community health strategists, local health departments facilitate collaboration among public health, healthcare, and community organizations, among others, to achieve more integrated, evidence-based, culturally competent systems for HIV prevention and care. They are uniquely positioned to provide data and are leaders in broader efforts to fight stigma and address the root causes of health inequities and structural barriers to effective HIV prevention and care. These local efforts are critical to address disparities in the impact and reach of the epidemic. Local health departments are also addressing the intersecting threats of sexually transmitted infections, viral hepatitis, tuberculosis, and the opioid crisis.

NACCHO works closely with its members to help advance the National HIV/AIDS Strategy goals:

- o NACCHO's Southern Initiative seeks to improve HIV outcomes among minority populations in the south through the use of Community Health Workers.
- o Projects in rural areas of Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia are increasing local capacity to respond to the infectious disease consequences of the opioid epidemic and offer comprehensive harm reduction programs to address the needs of people who inject drugs.
- o NACCHO recently completed an action planning project focused on building local health department capacity to collaborate with schools and other stakeholders to implement school-based prevention programs that reduce HIV/STIs among adolescents.
- o This year, NACCHO also signed the U=U Consensus Statement, published survey findings about PrEP implementation among LHDs, presented findings from an evaluation of local implementation of the Health is Power campaign, and updated its [HIV Prevention, Care, and Treatment policy statement](#).

To learn more about NACCHO's work to reduce HIV in the U.S., visit its [HIV, STI, and Viral Hepatitis](#) webpage.

Theresa Spinner
National Association of County and City Health Officials
+1 202-783-5551
[email us here](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <http://www.einpresswire.com>

Disclaimer: If you have any questions regarding information in this press release please contact the company listed in the press release. Please do not contact EIN Presswire. We will be unable to assist you with your inquiry. EIN Presswire disclaims any content contained in these releases. © 1995-2019 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.