



HIV/AIDS

AND

AMERICAN INDIANS/ ALASKA NATIVES



HIV/AIDS is devastating communities of color around the globe in ways that we don't fully comprehend. What we DO know about HIV/AIDS is that it is preventable. Know the facts and join us in the fight against HIV/AIDS!

For more information on HIV/AIDS and American Indians/Alaska Natives, contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-458-5231 or on the Internet at www.cdcnpin.org.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that today there are 850,000–950,000 HIV-positive people living in the United States, more than at any other time in the epidemic. An estimated 180,000–280,000 HIV-positive individuals do not know they are infected, and therefore are not benefiting from HIV care and treatment, and may also be unknowingly transmitting the virus. An additional 250,000 people living with HIV who are aware of their status may not be getting the care they need or prevention support to help them protect their partners. Altogether, roughly half of all people living with HIV in the United States are untested, untreated, or both.¹

What We Know:

- According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data reported through December 2001, 2,537 American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN) from all states and territories were diagnosed with AIDS.²
- Like other communities of color, the number of AI/AN persons living with AIDS continues to rise.
- Of the states and territories that have confidential HIV reporting, 962 AI/AN were reported with HIV (but had not developed AIDS) as of December 2001. These cases were predominantly among men **ages 25–34** and women **ages 20–39**.²

Within Native Communities, Those Most Affected by HIV (and Who Had Not Developed AIDS) Were:

- Men who have sex with men: **52 percent** of HIV cases reported among Native men **13 years and older** were attributed to male-to-male sexual contact.
- Women who were infected through heterosexual contact: **40 percent** of HIV cases reported among Native women **13 years and older** were attributed to heterosexual contact.
- Injection drug users: **17 percent** of HIV cases reported among Native men and women were attributed to injection drug use.²

Ten states account for nearly two-thirds of the AI/AN population (OK, CA, AZ, NM, AK, WA, NC, TX, NY, MI). Of these states, nine had reported HIV data to the CDC as of December 2001. However, California has not reported HIV cases to the CDC and two states only recently initiated HIV reporting.²

Major Obstacles in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS in AI/AN Communities Are:

- Incomplete HIV data, because not all states have adopted integrated HIV/AIDS surveillance;
- Frequent misclassification of an individual's ethnicity as Latino, White, or Asian;
- Lack of access to confidential testing and care;
- The HIV diagnosis is often made late in the disease's progression; and
- Many people do not recognize themselves or their partners as being at risk of HIV infection.

Let's Take Action!

In order to fight against HIV/AIDS in AI/AN communities, we need to address and better understand the following issues:

- The social, economic, spiritual, and geographic diversity that exists among different AI/AN communities.
- The need to improve surveillance systems for HIV/AIDS with the cooperation of state and territorial health departments, the Indian Health Service, and the CDC.
- Related public health disparities that signal potential risk of HIV infection (e.g., high rates of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and substance or alcohol use/abuse).
- The inclusion of community leadership (including parents, teachers, tribal leaders, etc.) in HIV/AIDS dialogue.

¹ Fleming, P.L., et al., "HIV Prevalence in the United States, 2000," 9th Annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, Feb. 24–28, 2002, Seattle, WA, Abstract 11.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report 2001, Vol. 13, No. 2.