

FIGHTING HIV/AIDS



Overall, transgender people face HIV infection rates many times higher than the general population, and rates for transgender people of color are even higher¹. Estimates are that one in four Black transgender people in the U.S. is living with HIV/AIDS².

Discrimination, stigma, social isolation, bias among health and social service providers, and a lack of targeted prevention efforts have all contributed to these high levels of infection. The National HIV/AIDS Prevention Strategy issued in 2010 for the first time recognized that transgender people are at high risk for HIV infection, and that until recently only minimal efforts have been made to target the trans population for prevention and treatment. Where transgender people have been included at all, they have often been inaccurately and unhelpfully lumped together with “Men who Have Sex With Men” (MSM) rather than addressed as a distinct population³. This neglect has been deadly, because research has shown that such concentrated epidemics require targeted responses for the most at-risk populations.

Since the release of the National Strategy, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has taken important steps toward addressing the trans HIV epidemic, including:

- Revising the national system for reporting HIV cases to capture sex assigned at birth and current gender identity in order to accurately assess the impact of HIV on trans people.
- Developing an HIV-related behavioral survey to monitor current HIV-related risk behaviors and prevention experiences among transgender women.
- Funding efforts to adapt proven behavioral HIV prevention programs for use with transgender people and to develop ground-breaking new interventions specifically aimed at transgender people.

However, there is still more to do in 2012 and beyond. Notably, while transgender people face high levels of HIV infection around the world, the U.S. has not yet taken concerted action to promote targeted prevention efforts for trans people globally.

1 *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, at 80; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV Infection Among Transgender People (2011). Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/transgender/pdf/transgender.pdf>.

2 *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, at 80.

3 White House Office of National AIDS Policy, *National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States*, at 14-15 (2010). Available at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/NHAS.pdf>.

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Policy steps

- Congress should fully fund implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy.
- Congress should fully fund comprehensive sexuality education and defund ineffective and dangerous abstinence-only-until-marriage programs.
- The CDC and the Department of Justice should develop and implement comprehensive HIV prevention strategies for correctional facilities, including those overseen by the Federal Bureau of Prisons.
- The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) should issue guidance for international HIV prevention efforts targeted at transgender people.
- The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) should require all PEPFAR-funded programs to certify that they do not promote anti-LGBT messages or discriminate against LGBT people.