



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health Services

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Health Officials Celebrate Progress on Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day *Testing Remains Crucial*

State health officials are encouraging sexually active youth to receive HIV testing as part of February 7th's "Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day." Between 1990 and 2008, the rate of reported HIV infection among African Americans in Wisconsin declined 42% from 74 per 100,000 in 1990 to 43 per 100,000 in 2008.

"Wisconsin has made significant advances in prevention and care, but new strategies are needed to reach younger people at most risk today" said Dr. Seth Foldy, State Health Officer. "One approach is encouraging HIV testing of sexually-active youth during routine medical care."

Although fewer African Americans in Wisconsin have been diagnosed with HIV in recent years, they continue to be disproportionately affected by this epidemic. African Americans account for six percent of Wisconsin's overall population, but represented 39 percent of new HIV infections in 2008.

African American women are 15 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV infection than women of other races. HIV also disproportionately affects Black youth and men who have sex with men. The annual number of reported HIV cases among young African American men who have sex with men nearly tripled between 2000 and 2008 in metropolitan Milwaukee.

"Sexually active people of all colors and sexual orientations should 'get the test.' People who test HIV-positive benefit from prompt and effective treatment, and can reduce their risk to others," said Foldy. "Those who test HIV-negative are motivated to stay that way."

Joint efforts of African American leaders, community-based organizations and public health workers have provided HIV prevention services, including free or low-cost HIV tests, to thousands of Wisconsin African Americans. Of the 19,750 tests done annually at public sites across Wisconsin, 7,500 (or 38 percent) are given to African Americans.

Public health programs that improve access to HIV testing and medical treatment have drastically reduced death rates from AIDS among all racial and ethnic groups in the state. Preventing future infections will also require more effective control of other sexually-transmitted diseases, like syphilis and gonorrhea, which can increase the risk of HIV infection.

"National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is an opportunity to renew our commitment to prevent infection and care for people with HIV infection and AIDS, and to eliminate racial inequities in health. Discuss the epidemic with friends on February 7th and you will likely find you know someone whose life has been affected," Foldy said.

For more information about the Wisconsin AIDS/HIV Program, go to <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/aids-hiv/index.htm>

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