

HIV/AIDS AMONG AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CALIFORNIA

What you should know:

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Center for Infectious Diseases, Office of AIDS (OA) maintains a confidential, central registry of demographic and clinical information on all reported cases of HIV and AIDS in California.

- As of March 31, 2009, African Americans make up approximately 7.0 percent of California's total population, yet represent 19.1 percent of HIV cases and 17.9 percent of cumulative AIDS cases in the state.
- In 2006, the AIDS incidence rate per 100,000 population among African Americans in California was more than three times that of Whites and Latinos (32.35/100,000 versus 9.6/100,000 and 9.67/100,000, respectively).
- African American men who have sex with men (MSM) and MSM/injection drug users (IDUs) represent over two-thirds of cumulative adult male AIDS cases among African Americans.
- African American MSM and MSM/IDU make up approximately 70.0 percent of all newly HIV-infected African American males.
- Among all African American women with AIDS, 42.0 percent report heterosexual contact as the mode of exposure to HIV, and nearly 40.0 percent report being infected through injection drug use.

What we do:

African Americans in California face cultural, geographic, and structural barriers that make it essential to use culturally grounded HIV prevention interventions. To address the unique African American HIV prevention needs, OA has developed a Strategic Response to HIV and AIDS in African American Communities that includes the following:

- OA has a dedicated staff specialist position that provides programmatic leadership and consultation for African American HIV programs, projects, and policies.
- The California African American HIV/AIDS Coalition (CAAHAC), was created as a result of the *Statewide African American HIV/AIDS Initiative*, Assembly Bill (AB) 1142 (Dymally, Chapter 403, Statutes of 2005). OA assists CAAHAC focus efforts in five regions (the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Riverside-San Bernardino, Sacramento-Central Valley, and San Diego). As required by AB 1142, on January 1, 2008, CAAHAC became an independent, non-profit agency.
- Through a competitive bid process, OA awarded funding to ONTRACK/*One Love Project* in March 2007 to provide capacity building and technical assistance to CAAHAC, and in the five regions identified in AB 1142. ONTRACK's five regional coordinators promote technical assistance and training services to community and



faith-based organizations, and local public health agencies. *One Love Project* has also established a comprehensive information and data resource at: www.oneloveca.org.

- OA also provided statewide capacity building and technical assistance for CAAHAC to host an African American HIV Summit, develop a strategic organization and fund development plan, and recruit board and advisory council members. ONTRACK also provides regional capacity building trainings on effective behavioral interventions, such as SISTA (*Sisters Informing Sisters on the Topic of AIDS*) and an African American MSM cultural competency training entitled, “**Finding the Invisible Man.**” As of January 2009, ONTRACK delivered tailored technical assistance to 22 community-based organizations (CBOs) and coalitions throughout California. Areas of technical assistance have included: strategic planning, organization and board development, coalition development, program/project management, marketing and outreach, database development, Website design, resource/fund development, faith community outreach strategies, tracking and documentation systems, and program evaluation.

Policies and Programs

OA was awarded \$723,000 from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to implement emergency department HIV screening and rapid testing at three Bay Area hospitals that serve high proportions of African Americans clients: Alameda County Medical Center Highland Hospital, Alta Bates Summit Medical Center, and San Francisco General Hospital. Individuals testing HIV positive are immediately linked to HIV care and prevention services/social networking.

As recommended by the Gay/MSM Task Force of the California HIV Planning Group, OA requested the development of African American Action Plans (AAP) from 18 local health jurisdictions (LHJs). AAP identify and respond to the unique psychological, socio-cultural, and community-based factors that contribute to HIV risk behavior among African American gay/MSM and have two goals: 1) to increase HIV testing among African American gay/MSM; and 2) to provide Health Education/Risk Reduction (HE/RR) services that account for the various individual, inter-personal, communal and societal factors that place African American gay/MSM at risk for either transmitting or contracting HIV. HE/RR activities include: targeted outreach prevention activities, individual-level interventions, such as risk-reduction counseling and prevention case management; group-level interventions (GLI), including evidence-based interventions with proven efficacy and/or effectiveness, or the implementation of a “home-grown” GLI; and community-level interventions (CLI), which include evidence-based interventions, such as Popular Opinion Leader (POL), MPowerment Project or d-Up: Defend Yourself! or “home-grown” CLI interventions, and health communications/public information.

Community-based Participatory Research Efforts and Trainings:

OA has provided funding for work involving communities and university researchers. These research projects include:

- **BRUTHAS:** *HIV prevention for African American men on the down low*, a partnership between California HIV/AIDS Research Program (CHRP), California-Prevention and Education Project, and OA;
- **FeMAALES (Females of African American Legacy Empowering Self) Project:** *Reducing HIV risk behaviors and increasing sexual communication skills in African*

American women with at-risk male partners, a partnership with University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)/Drew/RAND

- **HOLLA:** *Developing a Tailored Case Management for Men Recently Released from Prison*, a partnership between CHRP and University of California, San Francisco, Center for AIDS Prevention Studies;
- **MAALES (Men of African American Legacy Empowering Self) Project:** HIV prevention for African American MSM who do not identify as gay, a partnership with UCLA/Drew/RAND;

Finally, in collaboration with CDC, OA is also providing trainings on innovative, culturally specific prevention interventions for HIV/AIDS among African American MSM.

- **d-up: Defend Yourself!** is a community-level HIV/AIDS prevention intervention designed for and developed by Black MSM. d-up! is a cultural adaptation of the POL intervention and is designed to promote social norms of condom use and assist African American MSM recognize and handle risk-related racial and sexual bias. Within California, CDC and OA have collaborated in providing training of facilitators and training of trainers for LHJs and CBOs in the Oakland and Los Angeles areas.

Community Relations:

CDPH/OA strongly values working closely with the communities we serve to positively impact public health through partnerships with LHJs, CBOs, and other service providers. Among OA's partners include: Black Gay Men's Advocacy Coalition, National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), National Medical Association, National Association of Black Social Workers, Black AIDS Institute and the City of Oakland. OA also collaborates within CDPH with the Black Infant Health Program (BIH) to prevent perinatal HIV transmission through the integration of HIV prevention education into BIH sites. OA has increased access to HIV treatment for pregnant women and also coordinates with the Sexually Transmitted Disease Control Branch.

Helpful resources:

- For information on national data related to African Americans and HIV/AIDS see: www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/aa/resources/factsheets/aa.htm.
- For epidemiological data specific to African Americans in California, see: www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/AIDS/Pages/OAAfricanAmericans.aspx.
- For general information on HIV/AIDS, see: www.AIDS.gov/basic/index.html.
- For NASTAD conference presentation: February 4-5, 2008, please refer to: <http://www.msmandhiv.org/documents/NorthAmerica/Homepage/BlackGayMenMSMandHIVAIDSCnfrntingtheCrisisandPlanningfrActin.pdf>.
- For information on HIV/AIDS services, visit the California AIDS Hotline at: www.AIDShotline.org or call (800) 367-AIDS.