

HIV Fact Sheet



BASIC HIV EDUCATION

Minnesotans Need Basic HIV Education

Polling research shows that while most Americans have some knowledge about HIV, misinformation exists about how HIV transmission occurs and how it can be prevented. This misinformation leads to stigma associated with HIV and contributes to the incidence of new HIV infections.

In 1988, U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop mailed an educational report on HIV to every household in the United States. This mailing was unprecedented and reflected Koop's strong belief that HIV education was essential to stopping the spread of HIV. This report, as well as Koop's additional educational efforts on HIV, raised awareness among the general public and contributed to cumulative HIV infections in 1991 at 206,000 rather than the projected 270,000.

No such educational effort has been conducted on HIV in the past twenty years. While HIV prevention programs targeting specific subpopulations with more intensive HIV programs are important, basic HIV education for all Minnesotans is essential. In Minnesota, upwards of 300 new HIV infections occur each year, but each of these new infections is entirely preventable.

Basic HIV Education Helps Prevent HIV Transmission

Currently, many HIV education programs are only made available to targeted sub-groups of the population. An increase in basic HIV education would combat stigma associated with HIV, encourage additional individuals to get tested and learn their status, and ultimately prevent new HIV infections from occurring.

In addition to a lack of basic education on HIV, it is estimated that 25% of those infected with HIV do not know their status. When HIV positive individuals learn their status, receive education about HIV and how it is transmitted, and begin to receive necessary medical care and support services, they are less likely to transmit the virus to others.

TAKE ACTION!

Legislation has been introduced establishing a broad-based, basic HIV education initiative for the general public. SF204/HF681 would require the commissioner of health to ensure that Minnesotans receive basic HIV education through a public education campaign. The campaign would promote a toll free resource and referral service and Web site in the campaign messages. An evaluation of the campaign's effectiveness would be required. Please support SF204/HF681!

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