

CDC launches 'Let's Stop HIV Together' campaign

Written by George E. Curry, NNPA Editor-in-Chief
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WASHINGTON (NNPA) – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced a new national campaign recently to remove the stigma associated with HIV and AIDS and to end complacency about the epidemic

Pictured: Jamar Rogers with mother, Danielle.

“In the fight against HIV, stigma and complacency are among our most insidious opponents,” said Dr. Kevin Fenton, director of CDC’s National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention. “This campaign reminds us that HIV affects every corner of society, and that it will take every one of us – regardless of HIV status, gender, race or sexual orientation – working together.”

The “Let’s Stop HIV Together” campaign is being kicked off with outdoor and transit advertising in six cities heavily impacted by HIV: Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York City

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and Washington, D.C. Another 21 cities are scheduled to be added before the end of the year, CDC officials said.

The initiative, announced a week before delegates to the International AIDS Conference assembled in the nation's capital, is part of a CDC's Act Against AIDS project, a 5-year national communication initiative designed to raise awareness of the HIV crisis in the U.S.

"Stigma remains a major barrier to HIV testing, condom use and other preventive strategies," explained Dr. Jonathan Mermin, director of CDC's Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention. "It also discourages those living with HIV from seeking the care and treatment they need to stay healthy and avoid transmitting HIV to others."

According to the CDC, there are approximately 1.1 million Americans living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, including approximately 510,000 African-Americans. Blacks are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, a pattern that has deepened over time.

Today:

- Although Blacks represent only 12 percent of the U.S. population, they accounted for 44 percent of all new HIV infections in 2009 and are 44 percent of all people living with HIV;
- The rate of new AIDS diagnoses per 100,000 among Black adults was about 10 times that of Whites in 2010. The rate for Black men (75.6) was the highest of any group, followed by African-American women (33.7). The rate among White men was only 9.1;
- Black women accounted for 57 percent of all new HIV infections among women in 2009 and 64 percent of all new AIDS diagnoses among women. In 2010, 85 percent of Black women were infected through heterosexual activities and
- Although Black teenagers represented only 15 percent of U.S. teens in 2010, they accounted for 70 percent of all new AIDS diagnoses among teens.

A survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation in 2009 found that Blacks were six times more likely to be very concerned about becoming infected with HIV than Whites (38 percent to 6 percent). That same survey showed that many misconceptions about HIV still persist.

For example, 27 percent of those interviewed thought HIV could be transmitted by sharing a drinking glass, 17 percent thought the virus could be transmitted by touching a toilet seat and 14 percent believed they could become infected by being in the same swimming pool with someone HIV-positive. Of course, none of this is true.

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The “Let’s Stop HIV Together” campaign will feature national online and print advertising, broadcast public service announcements, social media outreach as well as local billboard and transit advertising in 27 U.S. cities.

The new campaign features people living with AIDS standing with friends and relatives as they urge Americans to join the fight against the disease.

In one ad, Jamar Rogers, a semifinalist on NBC’s singing competition, “The Voice,” who disclosed that he is HIV-positive. He is pictured with his mother, Danielle proclaiming, “I am a devoted son, a singer, and an artist. And I am living with HIV. In large, red ink is the inscription, “Let’s stop HIV together – Jamar.”

In the video version, Jamar says, “I’m healthy today because of the love and support of my mother, family and friends, who gave me the courage to get the care and treatment that will keep me singing for decades to come.”

Read more: <http://www.nnpa.org/news/health/cdc-launches-%e2%80%98let%e2%80%99s-stop-hiv-together%e2%80%99-campaign-by-george-e-curry/#ixzz21SYcbcPx>