

Act Against AIDS

Refocusing National Attention on the HIV Crisis in the United States



Act Against AIDS is a five-year, multi-faceted communication campaign designed to contribute to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) goal of reducing HIV incidence in the United States. The campaign is being planned and released in phases, many of which are scheduled to run concurrently. Each phase, with its own unique objectives and target audiences, will utilize mass media and direct-to-consumer communication channels to deliver important HIV prevention messages in a manner designed to be compelling, credible, and relevant. Some campaign phases will address basic education and awareness needs, while others will address the specific risk reduction needs of the populations at greatest risk for infection.

According to CDC data released last year, approximately 56,000 Americans become newly infected with HIV each year — substantially more than was previously known — and more than 14,000 people with AIDS still die each year in the United States.^{1,2} Yet, studies show that some of the populations with the highest rates of infection either do not recognize their risk or believe that HIV is no longer a serious health threat. Research indicates that individuals who are complacent about the threat of HIV are more likely to practice risky behaviors.³⁻¹⁰

Campaign Phases

Kick-off Phase: "9 ½ minutes"

CDC is launching *Act Against AIDS* with an initial phase to directly address complacency by reminding all Americans of the significant health threat of HIV in their own country. "9 ½ minutes" is the theme, and the message is simple: Right here in the United States, every 9 ½ minutes, someone's brother, mother, sister, father, or neighbor is infected with HIV. The "9 ½ minutes" messages are being delivered through various communication channels, including online banner ads, transit ads, radio ads, airport dioramas, and online videos.

All of the materials end with a message to "Get the Facts" and include a "9 ½ Minutes" Web site

where individuals can go for information about HIV and AIDS and for the steps they can take to help protect themselves, their partners, and their communities. The Web site address is: www.NineAndHalfMinutes.org.



Future Phases: Targeted Communications to Communities At Risk

The next phases of the *Act Against AIDS* campaign will focus on reaching specific populations at greatest risk. Efforts will focus first on African-Americans who — by far — bear the greatest burden of HIV of any racial/ethnic group in the United States.

While accounting for just 12 percent of the U.S. population, blacks represent roughly half of new HIV infections and AIDS deaths every year.^{1,2}





Campaign phases already under development for African-Americans include:

■ **African-American Gay and Bisexual Men**

With the objective of increasing HIV testing among African-American men who have sex with men (MSM), CDC has been working with behavioral and communication scientists, community leaders, and representatives of the target audience to develop effective messages and materials for this population. Formative research for this phase is already underway, which includes a pilot test of online banner ads, as well as extensive qualitative research and message testing. The pilot test will begin in Spring 2009, followed by a nationwide launch in early 2010.

■ **African-American Women**

Under the theme, *Take Charge. Take the Test.*, this phase is designed to increase HIV testing among African-American women. *Take Charge. Take the Test.* materials, including billboard displays, have already been pilot tested in two cities and have demonstrated efficacy in increasing HIV testing among the target audience. Planning is underway for a wide-scale release of this phase later this year.

■ **African-American General Population**

Another phase of *Act Against AIDS* will be aimed at the general population of African-Americans. With dual objectives of increasing knowledge and decreasing myths, CDC is developing messages and materials with the theme *I Know*. This phase will be launched during the summer of 2009.

Over the course of the multi-year campaign, additional phases will be launched for other populations at increased risk, including Latinos and other groups of MSM.

Campaign Dissemination: Reaching All Sectors of Society

CDC-Kaiser Media Initiative

Because successfully reducing the impact of HIV in the United States will require action from both within and beyond heavily affected African-American communities, CDC will partner with the Kaiser Family Foundation — a leader in health policy and communications — to enlist support from the media and entertainment industries in broadly disseminating campaign messages.

The CDC-Kaiser Media Initiative will establish a coalition of entertainment, print, online, and other media organizations interested in providing support to *Act Against AIDS* by placing campaign ads and where possible creating complementary efforts. The initiative will include an emphasis on partnerships with media that are uniquely positioned to reach African-Americans, given the heavy burden of HIV in this population.

Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative

To help ensure the widespread delivery of campaign messages and materials within African-American communities, CDC has also launched the *Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative* (AAALI), a \$10 million, five-year partnership with 14 of the nation's leading African-American organizations to integrate HIV prevention into each organization's existing outreach programs.

The 14 AAALI partners represent a broad spectrum of the African-American community and were chosen based on reach, credibility, history of service, and influence at the national and community level. All organizations have a formal network of affiliates in African-American communities throughout the country and a demonstrated ability to effectively reach African-Americans at risk through established communication platforms.



Each organization is using AAALI funds to support an HIV coordinator who will work through the organization's membership networks to disseminate *Act Against AIDS* and other campaign materials, as well as to sponsor other HIV prevention activities. The initiative builds upon the longstanding commitment of many African-American leaders to address the HIV crisis in black communities across the nation.

Campaign Complements CDC's Ongoing Prevention Efforts

The *Act Against AIDS* campaign is only one component of CDC's comprehensive HIV prevention efforts. It will add a key element by helping to break through complacency and ensure all Americans have access to the basic facts about HIV in the United States today.

At an individual level, the campaign will strive to help people recognize their own risk and take action. At a community level, the campaign will work to create and sustain norms that are supportive of successful HIV prevention, and at a national level, the campaign will seek to remind all Americans of the continued toll of HIV in our nation and the need for collaborative action. The campaign will be evaluated and refined over time based on its ability to motivate action, change knowledge and awareness, and ultimately change HIV prevention practices.

Each year, CDC devotes roughly \$750 million to HIV prevention activities nationwide. These include designing and implementing systems to track the course of the HIV epidemic, conducting research to develop new HIV prevention approaches, working through public health partners and health care providers to expand access to HIV testing, and delivering proven prevention programs for those at greatest risk through nationwide partnerships with state and local health departments and community-based organizations.

For more information on *Act Against AIDS*, please visit: www.cdc.gov/hiv/aaa

References

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