

*Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote
Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior*

At-A-Glance: The Public Health Problem

- C Five of the 10 most commonly reported infectious diseases in the U.S. are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); in 1995, STDs accounted for 87 percent of cases reported among those ten.
- C An estimated 45 million persons in the U.S. are infected with genital herpes, and one million new cases occur per year.
- C Chlamydia and gonorrhea infections account for 15 percent of cases of infertility among U.S. women.
- C Four subtypes of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) - a sexually transmissible virus that causes genital warts -- are responsible for an estimated 80 percent of cervical cases. There are approximately 14,000 new cases of cervical cancer each year.
- C An estimated 800,000 to 900,000 persons are living with HIV in the United States, with approximately 40,000 new HIV infections occurring every year. An estimated one-third of infected Americans have not been tested and are unaware of their status.
- C The AIDS epidemic is shifting toward women. While women account for 28 percent of HIV cases reported since 1981, they accounted for 32 percent of those reported between July 1999 and June 2000. Similarly, women account for 17 percent of AIDS cases reported since 1981, but 24 percent of those reported between July 1999 and June 2000.
- C There are an estimated 104,000 child victims of sexual abuse per year, and the proportion of women in current relationships who are subject to sexual violence is estimated at 8%.
- C In their extreme form, anti-homosexual attitudes lead to anti-gay violence. Averaged over two dozen studies, 80 percent of gay men and lesbians had experienced verbal or physical harassment on the basis of their orientation, 45 percent had been threatened with violence, and 17 percent had experienced a physical attack.
- C Nearly one-half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended. Unintended pregnancy is not only medically costly, it is also socially costly in terms of out-of-wedlock births, reduced educational attainment and employment opportunity, increased welfare dependency, and later child abuse and neglect.
- C An estimated 1,366,000 induced abortions occurred in the U.S. in 1996. Surveillance data indicate that, for those states that report previous induced abortions, nearly 45 percent of abortions reported in 1996 were obtained by women who had already had at least one abortion.