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**VIII. Fact Sheet:  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons**

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- No one knows how many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people live in the United States or what percentage of the total population they represent. It is equally uncertain whether LGBT people experience different rates of addiction than others, although a number of studies conclude that LGBT people “...are more likely to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs than the general population, are less likely to abstain, [and] report higher rates of substance abuse problems....”<sup>1</sup>
- For more than a decade, gay men have been drawn to methamphetamine because of its initial aphrodisiac effects. Its increasing popularity among gay men who use it this way has prompted substance abuse professionals familiar with LGBT issues to refer to methamphetamine as “the gay man’s second drug of choice [after alcohol],” with injection use more common in this population than among meth users as a whole.<sup>2</sup>
- Stimulant abuse is known “to lead to uncharacteristically aberrant or deviant sexual behaviors, the use of prostitutes, and HIV high-risk behaviors.”<sup>3</sup>
- A 1997 landmark ethnographic study in Los Angeles County involving interviews with 54 current users of crystal meth and 9 former users, all of whom self-identified as gay, bisexual, transgender, or heterosexually identified men who have sex with men (MSM), revealed that:<sup>4</sup>
  - 41 percent of participants were HIV positive.
  - 64 percent considered themselves “functional” meth users.

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<sup>1</sup> National Association of Lesbian and Gay Addiction Professionals. July 2002. Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Problems and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Individuals. [www.nalgap.org/PDF/Resources/LGBT.pdf](http://www.nalgap.org/PDF/Resources/LGBT.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Marcelle, George. May/June 1996. Meth, Men, and Myths: Increased Risk in the Gay Community. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention’s *Prevention Pipeline*. Volume 9, No. 3.

<sup>3</sup> The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. 1999. Treatment Improvement Protocols: TIP 33: Treatment for Stimulant Use Disorders, Chapter 2. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/bv.fcgi?rid=hstat5.section.57619](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/bv.fcgi?rid=hstat5.section.57619)

<sup>4</sup> Reback, C.J., Ph.D. 1997. The Social Construction of a Gay Drug: Methamphetamine Use Among Gay and Bisexual Males in Los Angeles. [www.uclaisap.org/documents/final-report\\_cjr\\_1-15-04.pdf](http://www.uclaisap.org/documents/final-report_cjr_1-15-04.pdf)

- 79 percent reported using a condom only occasionally when engaging in anal sex, identified as one of the highest risks for HIV transmission.
  - "...use of crystal meth...is facilitated through various gay institutions such as telephone sex lines, personal advertising, computer networks, circuit parties, bars, and clubs."
- Reported increases in methamphetamine use among MSM across the country raise public health concerns because meth use has been linked with sexual risk behaviors for HIV and STDs as well as sharing of injection equipment. Methamphetamine and other "party" drugs (ecstasy, ketamine, and GHB [gamma hydroxybutyrate]) may be used to decrease social inhibitions and enhance sexual experiences. Along with alcohol and nitrate inhalants ("poppers"), these drugs have been associated with risky sexual practices among MSM.<sup>5</sup>
  - Methamphetamine use also may be particularly attractive to some gay/bisexual men who are HIV infected because meth 1) helps these men cope with an HIV+ diagnosis, 2) provides temporary escape from their HIV status, 3) makes them feel better physically, 4) may be a method for coping with the prospect of death, and 5) helps users manage negative self-perceptions.<sup>6</sup>
  - Methamphetamine use as a sexual performance-enhancing drug among gay men has substantially increased their risk for transmission of HIV/AIDS and other STDs.<sup>7, 8</sup>
  - Reviewing studies of substance abuse among LGBT people for a 2001 treatment provider's guide, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) noted that "abuse of methamphetamine has increased dramatically in recent years among some segments of the LGBT community. HIV and hepatitis C infections are linked with methamphetamine use." For those methamphetamine users in this group who inject the drug, CSAT warns that there is also risk for hepatitis B.<sup>9</sup>
  - "In one recent study, 25 percent of those men who reported methamphetamine use in the previous month were infected with HIV. The drug appears to double the

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<sup>5</sup> National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated July 25, 2005. Fact Sheet: HIV/AIDS Among Men Who Have Sex With Men. [www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/msm.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/msm.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Semple, S.J.; Patterson, T.L.; Grant, I. 2002. Motivations associated with methamphetamine use among HIV+ men who have sex with men. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*. pp. 149–156. [www.hnrc.ucsd.edu/publications\\_pdf/3352002.pdf](http://www.hnrc.ucsd.edu/publications_pdf/3352002.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Marcelle, George. May/June 1996. Meth, Men, and Myths: Increased Risk in the Gay Community. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's *Prevention Pipeline*. Volume 9, No. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. March 8, 2004. 2004 National STD Prevention Conference: Crystal methamphetamine use, the Internet, and other factors likely fueling increases in STDs, risky behavior among gay and bisexual men. [www.cdc.gov/std/2004STDCConf/MediaRelease/CrystalMeth.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/2004STDCConf/MediaRelease/CrystalMeth.htm)

<sup>9</sup> The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. 2001. A Provider's Introduction to Substance Abuse Treatment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Individuals, DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 01-3498. <http://media.shs.net/prevline/pdfs/BKD392/index.pdf>

risk of infection (both because it erases inhibitions and, it seems, because of physiological changes that make the virus easier to transmit), and the risk climbs the more one uses it.”<sup>10</sup>

- Between 1,039,000 and 1,185,000 people in the United States were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2003. Of them, MSM represented the largest proportion.<sup>11</sup> An estimated 207,323 MSM—including 24,334 MSM who inject drugs—were living with AIDS. MSM represented 66 percent of all men in the United States who were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2003, and 51 percent of all people living with HIV/AIDS at that time.<sup>12</sup>
- Woman-to-woman transmission of HIV is rare compared to male rates of transmission. Through December 1998, there were a total of 109,311 AIDS cases among women. Of these, 2,220 were women who had sex with women (WSW). Of these 2,220 WSW, 347 were reported to have had sex only with women, and 98 percent of them also had another risk, injection drug use, in most of these cases.<sup>13</sup>
- In recent years, the Internet has created new opportunities for MSM to meet sex partners. Internet users can easily and anonymously find partners with similar sexual interests. The Internet also may normalize risky behaviors by making others aware of these behaviors and creating new connections between the men who engage in them. In contrast, the Internet also has been demonstrated to have potential as a powerful tool for use with interventions.<sup>14</sup>
- A 2001 cross-sectional Internet study of sexual and drug-using behaviors among more than 2,600 MSM chatroom participants who completed an online survey found strong associations among use of crystal meth, unprotected anal intercourse, multiple sex partners, and an incidence of STDs.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Specter, Michael. May 23, 2005. Higher risk: Crystal meth, the Internet, and dangerous choices about AIDS. *The New Yorker*. [www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/050523fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/050523fa_fact)

<sup>11</sup> National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated June 21, 2005. Fact Sheet: A Glance at the HIV/AIDS Epidemic. [www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/Facts/At-A-Glance.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/Facts/At-A-Glance.htm)

<sup>12</sup> National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated July 25, 2005. Fact Sheet: HIV/AIDS Among Men Who Have Sex With Men. [www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/msm.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/msm.htm)

<sup>13</sup> National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated July 2003. Fact Sheet: HIV/AIDS Among Women Who Have Sex With Women. [www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/wsw.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/wsw.htm)

<sup>14</sup> National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Updated July 25, 2005. Fact Sheet: HIV/AIDS Among Men Who Have Sex With Men. [www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/msm.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/msm.htm)

<sup>15</sup> Hirshfield, S.; Remien, R.H.; Walavalkar, I.; Chiasson, M.A. 2004. Crystal Methamphetamine Use Predicts Incident STD Infection Among Men Who Have Sex With Men Recruited Online: A Nested Case-Control Study. *J Med Internet Res* 6(4):e41. [www.jmir.org/2004/4/e41/](http://www.jmir.org/2004/4/e41/)

- Underscoring regional differences in the popularity of methamphetamine among gay men, an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that, in a 2005 street survey, 10 percent of self-identified gay and bisexual men in the city reported having used crystal meth during the prior 6 months, compared with 18 percent who said they had done so in a comparable survey done in 2003. This prompted city health officials to suggest that meth use in this bay area population may be declining.<sup>16</sup> But earlier in 2005, a journalist quoted representatives of several large LGBT-serving programs in New York City who had witnessed an increase in injection use of crystal meth among gay men in their community.<sup>17</sup> The New York City article echoes similar recent accounts published in gay media in Washington, DC, and in Boston, pointing to meth's arrival in eastern metropolitan gay culture.

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<sup>16</sup> Buchanan, Wyatt. November 4, 2005. San Francisco interviews indicate drop in meth use by gay men: Experts say results should be backed by other research. *San Francisco Chronicle*. [www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/11/04/BAG7KFJ1GL1.DTL](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/11/04/BAG7KFJ1GL1.DTL)

<sup>17</sup> Osborne, Duncan. January 2005. More gay men injecting meth: Needle exchange programs report more gay, bisexual men among their client base. *Gay City News*. Vol. 4, No. 2 [www.gaycitynews.com/gcn\\_355/moregaymen.html](http://www.gaycitynews.com/gcn_355/moregaymen.html)