



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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## THE AIDS INSTITUTE SUPPORTS NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY Communities Nationwide Hold Events to Raise Awareness

Washington, DC – The AIDS Institute urges communities across the country to actively participate in **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD)**, Thursday, February 7, 2008 which marks the eight annual observance. This national mobilization effort is designed to encourage African Americans across the United States to **get educated, get tested, get involved and get treated** for HIV/AIDS, as it continues to devastate Black communities. Special events such as free HIV/AIDS testing, prayer breakfasts, town hall meetings and memorial services will be held throughout the country.

While African Americans represent approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the group accounts for almost half (49%) of the nation's AIDS cases. According to the National Center for Health Statistics *2006 Report*, HIV/AIDS is one of the top 10 leading causes of death for African Americans; and in the same year African Americans accounted for more than half (54 percent) of estimated new HIV infections in the United States. During 2001–2004, the rate of HIV/AIDS diagnoses for African Americans decreased, although the rate for African Americans was still the highest rate for all racial and ethnic groups.

The primary mode of HIV transmission among African American men was sexual contact with other men, followed by heterosexual contact and injection drug use. The primary mode of HIV transmission among African American women was heterosexual contact, followed by injection drug use. Of the estimated 145 infants perinatally infected with HIV, 105 (73%) were African American (CDC, *HIV/AIDS Reporting System, unpublished data, June 2005*).

“As national advocates, The AIDS Institute is trying to spread the message during this national awareness encouraging all African Americans to get tested and know their HIV status. Our community must become vaccinated with education on reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS as well as getting personally involved in their local community's efforts to battle this disease.” commented Marilyn Merida, Immediate Past President of the Board of Directors of The AIDS Institute. She went on to say that, “We know that almost 100 African Americans are infected each day, we need to focus on why this is happening to our community, we know that barriers such as poverty, lack of access to treatment and medications, along with stigma, and negative stereotypes contribute to the alarming infection rates which go far beyond race.”

Dr. Gene Copello, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute, added “Given the gravity of the HIV epidemic in the African-American community, the time is long overdue to provide the prevention, research, care, and treatment resources necessary to address this health emergency in the African-American community and in all communities. The advocacy needed to make this happen is very important – at a time when we see a Fiscal Year 2009 federal budget proposed by the President that actually has cuts to the Ryan White Program, reductions to CDC HIV prevention, flat funding for HOPWA and NIH. Members of Congress need to hear loud and clear that this is unacceptable public health policy.”

For more information on **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day 2008**, please visit [www.blackaidsday.org](http://www.blackaidsday.org)

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For more information and to become involved in AIDS advocacy work, please contact  
The AIDS Institute at: (202) 835-8373, or by email at: [Info@theaidsinstitute.org](mailto:Info@theaidsinstitute.org) or [www.TheAIDSInstitute.org](http://www.TheAIDSInstitute.org)

The AIDS Institute is a national nonprofit agency that promotes action for social change  
through public policy research, advocacy and education.