



THE AIDS INSTITUTE

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THE AIDS INSTITUTE SUPPORTS NATIONAL WOMEN AND GIRLS HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY

Washington, DC – The AIDS Institute joins the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in celebrating National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on March 10, 2008. The purpose of this annual day is to raise awareness of the increasing impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls and encourage women and girls to take Action. The theme for 2008 is "Honoring Our Sisters: Women Living with HIV/AIDS".

Dr. Julie Louise Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention commented about this national observance and recommends that Women: "Talk to a health care provider if you have never been tested, or if you had your last HIV test some time ago. Treatment now can save your life, and you can take steps to protect your partner from the disease."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Women represent 26% of new diagnoses of HIV in 2005; High-risk heterosexual contact was the source of 80% of these newly diagnosed infections; Of the 127,150 women living with HIV/AIDS, 64% are African American, 19% White, 15% Hispanic, 1% Asian or Pacific Islander, and less than 1% were American Indian or Alaska Native.

Michelle Scavnicky, Director of Education with The AIDS Institute, noted that "As we reflect on the impact of HIV/AIDS, it is a shame that AIDS is still the leading cause of death for Black women ages 25 to 34. However, this year's theme honoring our sisters is a positive way to bring necessary awareness and recognition to the struggles that exist for women impacted by HIV/AIDS as well as the importance of getting tested and knowing your status."

Historically, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has affected more men than women, but women are being increasingly affected. Since 1985 the proportion of estimated AIDS cases diagnosed among women has more than tripled, from 7% in 1985 to 27% in 2005. And although each year more men than women become infected with HIV, this gap is slowly closing. In fact, if new HIV infections continue at their current rate worldwide, women with HIV may soon outnumber men with HIV.

"The local community needs to educate women and girls and provide support to prevent HIV/AIDS. With National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, we remind women and girls to talk to their doctor, avoid high-risk behaviors, and routinely get tested for HIV/AIDS." comments, Marylin Merida, board member of The AIDS Institute.

National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day intended to highlight the importance of HIV/AIDS education among women and girls and to stress the importance of knowing their HIV status as well as promote healthy behaviors that reduce the risk of HIV infection.

For more information about National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day and related links please go to: www.theaidsinstitute.org Events Section or www.AIDS.gov or www.womenshealth.gov

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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 or www.TheAIDSInstitute.org

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