NEW CDC HIV NUMBERS REINFORCE NEED TO HEIGHTEN NATION’S COMMITMENT TO PREVENTION

Focus on Gay Men of All Races and Ethnicities Must be Strengthened

Washington, DC – “Today’s announcement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that new HIV infections in the U.S. remain stable but has increased among gay men and other men who have sex with men, particularly among black gay men, is further evidence that our Nation’s commitment to HIV prevention must be heightened,” commented Carl Schmid, Deputy Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “At a time when Washington policy makers are debating ways to cut budgets, we cannot risk cutting HIV prevention programs, which account for only 4 percent of all federal HIV spending. Instead we should be increasing our investment,” Schmid added.

While the CDC reports the number of overall infections remain stable, there was an increase in the number of infections in one group, gay men. Despite being about 2 percent of the population, they accounted for 61 percent of the new infections in 2009, compared to 56 percent in 2006. This was driven by a dramatic number of new infections among young black gay men (48 percent increase among those ages 13-29).

“It is obvious we must invest our resources, prevention programs and research on where the epidemic is and where it is increasing. We hope federal, state, and local health departments together with community based organizations will appropriately adjust their programs to ensure the needs of the most affected communities are addressed. The National HIV/AIDS Strategy developed by the Obama Administration reinforces this need, but change is often met with resistance,” added Schmid.

“The 34 percent increase in the number of new infections among young gay men is yet another reminder for the need to have age appropriate sexuality education that includes a positive discussion of both heterosexual and homosexual relationships," said Michael Ruppal, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute.

The new CDC incidence numbers continue to demonstrate that HIV in the U.S. not only disproportionately affects gay men of all races and ethnicities, but African American and Latino men and women as well.

Investing in HIV prevention today will save money tomorrow. Preventing one infection will save approximately $355,000 in future lifetime medical costs. If we had prevented the 48,100 new cases in 2009 alone would translate into an astounding $17 billion less in lifetime medical costs.
President Obama has proposed an increase to CDC’s HIV prevention programs by $57 million in FY12. “When the U.S Congress returns to Washington in the fall and turns to completing action on its spending bills, we urge them to support at least this level of funding to ensure we can continue to prevent HIV infections in our country,” added Ruppal.

“Today’s news from the CDC is not good news. A stable number of new infections is not progress; we need to see a decline in the number of new infections. President Obama stated in the National HIV/AIDS Strategy that he envisions a country where HIV infections are rare. We look forward to that day, but it will only occur if we properly invest in HIV prevention today,” concluded Ruppal.

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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.

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