



World AIDS Day Statement 2009

On this World AIDS Day, we reflect on the sobering reality that the U.S. HIV/AIDS epidemic remains a persistent and destabilizing force in communities and within families across this country. Here in the United States, we have more than 56,000 new HIV infections each year and there are worrisome signs of a resurgent epidemic among gay men and men who have sex with men, as well as an epidemic that increasingly affects and targets communities of color.

The National Coalition of STD Directors recognizes fully that HIV is still a sexually transmitted disease (STD). In fact, with bio-medical advances in preventing mother to child transmission of HIV, and if syringe exchange programs are permitted to reach their full potential, preventing the sexual transmission of HIV demands greater attention and urgency. Such efforts must include robust STD prevention, testing and treatment as a core element of a comprehensive HIV prevention strategy, both domestically and abroad. NCS D supports the efforts of the Obama Administration to create our nation's first ever National HIV/AIDS Strategy and that such a strategy must deal adequately with the broader issues of co-infections with other STDs. The science itself points to this important area of convergence within sexual health. For example, a person with an STD is two to five times more likely to acquire HIV if exposed to the virus through sexual contact, and a person co-infected with HIV and another STD is more likely to transmit HIV through sexual contact than another HIV infected person who is not co-infected with an STD.

Working with partners inside and outside government, NCS D is committed to tackling the domestic HIV and STD epidemics. As we move forward, we must work to provide increased resources for the shrinking public health infrastructure tasked with this difficult work. We must also recognize that bio-medical interventions alone are too limiting and increased support must be provided for evidence-based behavioral interventions – particularly for youth and other vulnerable populations – that can help create a foundation for prevention that has too long eluded our nation. Finally, the social dynamics that drive HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases require an ever greater amount of attention as we move toward a more just public health framework in our country.

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The National Coalition of STD Directors is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association of public health sexually transmitted disease (STD) program directors in the 65 CDC directly funded project areas, which includes all 50 states, 7 cities, and 8 U.S. territories. As the only national organization with a constituency that provides frontline STD services, NCS D is the leading national voice for strengthening STD prevention, research and treatment. These efforts include advocating for effective policies, strategies, and sufficient resources, as well as increasing awareness of the medical and social impact of STDs.