

HIV/AIDS among African-American men in South Carolina

In the United States as well as in South Carolina, the HIV/AIDS epidemic disproportionately affects African-Americans compared with persons of other races and ethnicities.

In 2011, there were more than 14,946 persons reported to be living with HIV infection (including AIDS) in South Carolina. According to recent data, South Carolina ranked fourth in the country for the proportion (73%) of persons living with AIDS who are African-American. The rate of persons living with HIV/AIDS per 100,000 is almost six times higher for black males than for white males.

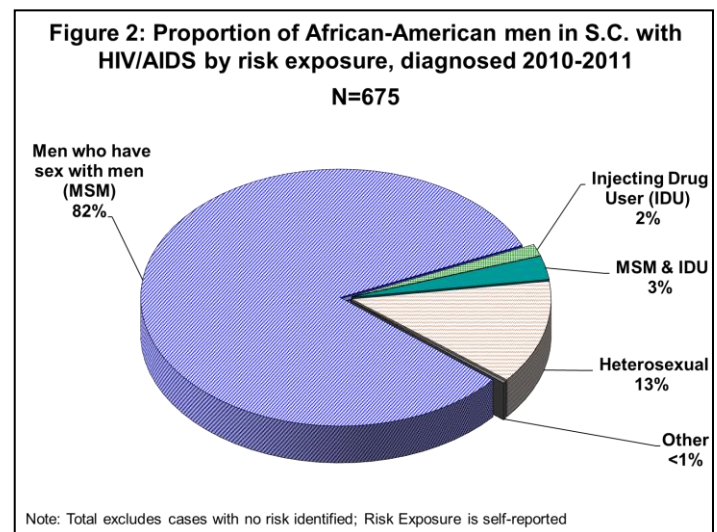
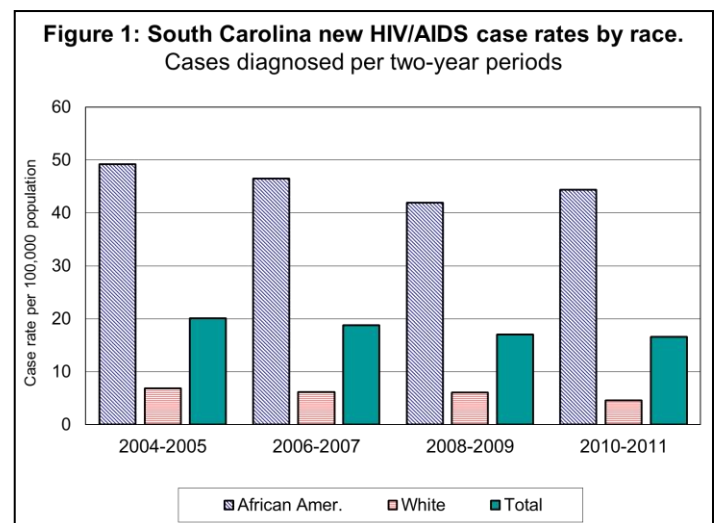
HIV Infections (including AIDS Cases)

- African-American men account for 13 percent of the state's population, yet comprise 47 percent of the persons living with and 55 percent of persons recently diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in South Carolina.
- African-American men have been hard hit by the epidemic. Seven of every ten men (73 percent) diagnosed are African-American (Figure 1).
- In 2010, African-American men comprised 54 percent of persons who died from AIDS in S.C.

What puts African-American men at risk?

- Among African-American men recently diagnosed with reported risks, most cases (82 percent) were attributed to sexual contact among men who have sex with men (MSM). 13 percent of cases were related to heterosexual contact. About two percent of new cases reported injecting drug use (IDU) as the risk; and three percent reported the combined risks of MSM and IDU (Figure 2).
- There are more than 7,025 African-American men living with HIV/AIDS in SC. More than 3,347 of these men reported sexual contact with other men as the primary risk factor. The majority of these men (53 percent) are over 45 years, and 31 percent are between the ages of 30-44 years.

Men who are African-American are at risk for HIV infection not because of their race, but because of the risk behaviors they may engage in. As with any risk population, HIV risk depends not on who you are, but on your specific sexual or substance using behaviors. HIV risk is also related to your access to health care, health education, and other prevention services. Also African-American men experience higher rates of other STDs, compared with other racial/ethnic groups. The presence of certain STDs can significantly increase the chance of contracting HIV. Further, a person who has an STD and HIV has a greater chance of infecting others with HIV.



What are obstacles to prevention?

Public health experts around the country recognize that African-Americans have experienced ongoing inequalities. These include societal benefits, health care, education and job opportunities. Unemployment, poverty, drug abuse and lack of health insurance are major co-factors that lead to higher rates of risk behaviors and HIV transmission. The impact is very significant in rural areas of the state. Our rural counties often have fewer prevention and health care providers, limited transportation for services, and fears of stigma and discrimination.

Men are encouraged to:

- Know their HIV status. It is important for their health and the health of those they love.
- Get tested for other STDs if they are having unprotected sex. Having certain STDs can increase their risk for contracting HIV.
- Change the way they view risk taking. Address their sexuality honestly and responsibly.
- Commit to talk openly with their sex partner.
- Use a condom correctly every time they have sex.
- Address stigma. Men can help spread the word about HIV in our communities. They can talk openly with their families, friends, and church members. This helps create a non-judgmental and supportive environment.
- Take a greater role. Assume more responsibility in helping end the spread of HIV/AIDS.

What is DHEC doing about HIV?

DHEC is committed to working with African-American men and building the capacity of other agencies to:

- Reach uninfected people at risk. DHEC works to provide prevention programs through local health departments and community-based organization (CBO) partners.
- Link infected people to treatment, care and prevention services.
- Continue the support of the African-American MSM Workgroup. The Workgroup was established in 2006 to focus on strategies to increase HIV/AIDS prevention activities. It also works to reduce stigma, engage community leaders in the African-American community, and build capacity among CBOs.
- Engage community and faith based organization leaders to address issues causing health disparities.

DHEC- Funded Programs

- **HIV Testing Initiatives**: Through the comprehensive HIV prevention program and the HIV expanded testing program, funding for African-American men's targeted testing initiatives has increased. The particular emphasis is on increased testing for African-American men who have sex with men (MSM).
- **Many Men, Many Voices** (targets gay men of color and MSM who do not identify themselves as gay or bisexual): Group-level behavioral intervention which addresses cultural, social and religious factors that influence the behavior of black MSM.
- **Mpowerment** (targets young adult MSM): Behavioral intervention which includes prevention, safer sex, and risk-reduction messages in a community-building format.
- **Healthy Relationships** (targets HIV positive men and women): Group-level behavioral intervention to develop skills and self-efficacy of persons living with HIV/AIDS, including HIV positive African-American men.

For more information on DHEC STD/HIV Programs, the African-American MSM Workgroup or other activities throughout South Carolina, call:

S.C. AIDS/STD Hotline toll free at 1-800-322-AIDS