

NATIONAL CALL TO ACTION – SIGN-ON
Addressing the HIV crisis among
Latinx gay, bisexual men, and other men who have sex with men

BACKGROUND

In the United States (U.S.) and dependent areas in 2017, the majority (70%) of diagnosed HIV infections were among gay and bisexual men. In the same year, 26% of all new HIV diagnoses were in the Latinx community; of those, 78% were among gay and bisexual men. Between 2012-2016, new HIV diagnoses among Latinx gay and bisexual men increased 12%; the greatest increase occurred in men between the ages of 25 to 34 (a 22% increase). Although Latinx gay and bisexual men would benefit from biomedical interventions such as preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP), only a small percentage of these men have access.¹

Geographically, rising diagnoses of HIV among Latinx gay and bisexual men are mainly localized in seven jurisdictions. From 2010-2014, 84% of the increase in HIV diagnoses among Latinx gay and bisexual men was in six states – Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas – and Puerto Rico.² Moreover, statistically significant increases were observed in the following jurisdictions within each of the states: (1) Phoenix; (2) California jurisdictions other than Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Oakland and Sacramento; (3) Miami, Tampa, and Florida jurisdictions other than Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Orlando, Tampa, and Jacksonville; (4) Chicago; (5) San Antonio and Texas jurisdictions other than Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, Austin, San Antonio, and El Paso.

In 2015, among all U.S. Latinx people living with HIV, only 59% received HIV medical care, 49% were retained in HIV care, and 50% had a suppressed viral load.³ Access to HIV care and treatment services is seriously compromised for Latinx gay and bisexual men by stigma, homophobia, and discrimination. Today the situation is worsened by:

1. Persistent U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids that demonize and criminalize immigrant, migrant, and undocumented communities and violate their human rights.⁴
2. Receding support for the Affordable Care Act (ACA), reduced funding for Ryan White HIV/AIDS Care Program and Medicare expansion. These universal health programs provide access to life-saving medications and the ability to prevent new infections to uninsured, low-income and undocumented people.⁵
3. A National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) that lacks a proactive vision for addressing the specific needs and concerns of Latinx gay and bisexual men. Missing from the numerous iterations of the NHAS are indicators or targets specific to addressing this crisis.⁶
4. Local planning bodies that insufficiently engage Latinx gay and bisexual men and/or fail to prioritize community-led comprehensive sexual health and prevention programs, that include unfettered access to PrEP.⁷
5. The lack of, or severely underfunded, community-led Latinx programs and organizations that deliver stigma-free, culturally/linguistically competent, evidence-informed and rights-based, comprehensive sexual health programs, inclusive of PrEP and PEP, as well as mental health, substance use, legal other support services.⁸

If current trends continue, 1 in 5 Latinx gay and bisexual men will be diagnosed with HIV during their lifetimes.⁹

¹ HIV prevention pill not reaching most Americans who could benefit – especially people of color. <https://www.hiv.gov/blog/hiv-prevention-pill-not-reaching-most-americans-who-could-benefit-especially-people-color> March 6, 2018.

² McCree DH, Walker T, DiNenno E, et al. A programmatic approach to address increasing HIV diagnoses among Hispanic/Latino MSM, 2010-2014. *Preventive Medicine*. 2018;114:64-71.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *HIV Surveillance Report, 2017*; vol. 29. <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/reports/hiv-surveillance.html>. Published November 2018.

⁴ Northern California HIV Policy Research Center. *Immigrant Health: Implications for HIV Care in California*. 2018. http://www.chprc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Immigration-HIV-Brief_April2018_CHPRC.pdf.

⁵ Kaiser Family Foundation. *The Affordable Care Act, The Supreme Court, and HIV: What are the implications?* 2012. <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/report/the-affordable-care-act-the-supreme-court-and-hiv-what-are-the-implications/>.

⁶ National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States, Updated to 2020, Indicator Supplement. December 2016. The White House, Washington. <https://www.hiv.gov/federal-response/national-hiv-aids-strategy/nhas-update>.

⁷ National Latino AIDS Action Network. *National Latino/Hispanic HIV/AIDS Action Agenda*. 2010. <http://www.nmac.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/National-Latino-HIV-Action-Agenda-NLAAN.pdf>.

⁸ Call to Action: Bridging the Gap for Quality Health Services for Gay, Bisexual and MSM, 2010/2014. National State and Territory AIDS Directors.

⁹ Hess KL, Hu X, Lansky A, et al. Lifetime risk of a diagnosis of HIV infection in the United States.

A CALL TO ACTION

We must address both the HIV service needs of Latinx gay and bisexual men in all parts of the country **AND** the need to fully fund and scale-up tailored prevention efforts where new HIV infections are rising. In response to increases in HIV incidence and the structural barriers to service access among Latinx gay and bisexual men, we call on allies, policy makers, funders, and public health officials at the local, state and national levels to:

1. Publicly denounce any anti-immigrant initiatives/laws. Develop action plans and implementation guidelines for ensuring unimpeded access to services for Latinx gay and bisexual men regardless of immigration status. This includes opposing changes to Public Charge rules.¹⁰
2. Include targets for Latinx gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men across **ALL** indicators in the *National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS)* update, in close consultation with community leaders.
3. Prioritize the HIV prevention and treatment needs of Latinx gay and bisexual men in the *End the Epidemic Initiative*, especially in focus jurisdictions experiencing increases in new HIV infections.
4. Direct increases in domestic HIV funding to Latinx gay and bisexual men's programs and organizations that provide comprehensive, community-led prevention programs that include PrEP and PEP.
5. Increase funding for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and support Medicaid and Marketplace reforms that advance universal health coverage and reject health care reforms that result in increased uninsured rates and reduced access to medically necessary prevention, care and treatment services.¹¹
6. Create guidelines for state and local health department HIV planning bodies that address recruitment, engagement, retention, and leadership development practices that are culturally/linguistically competent to ensure the full participation of Latinx gay and bisexual men.
7. Fund comprehensive (one-stop-shop) stigma-free, culturally/linguistically competent, evidence-informed and rights-based programs that include HIV/STI testing, prevention, care, and treatment, mental health, substance use, legal and other support services.
8. Meaningfully support the leadership pipeline by funding training and learning exchanges, creating safe professional development spaces, and creating leadership positions and other jobs for young Latinx gay and bisexual men in the HIV sector.

A SHOUT OUT TO OUR ALLIES

... who are federal policy makers and funders: **KEEP LATINX GAY AND BISEXUAL CENTRALLY VISIBLE**. Fully engage Latinx gay and bisexual in the articulation of goals and indicators – for both the End the Epidemic Initiative and updates to the NHAS.

... in the Latinx community: **PRIORITIZE LATINX GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN** in HIV-related prevention, care, treatment and support services.

... in the mainstream HIV/AIDS and LGBTI communities: **VISIBLY ELEVATE LATINX GAY AND BISEXUAL MEN**. Our needs are distinct and merit respect and focus.

STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH LATINX TRANSGENDER WOMEN AND MEN

We love and support our trans brothers and sisters. Any comprehensive response to heal Latinx communities and effectively address HIV requires that we give space for them to articulate their own needs and grievances. It is not our place to speak for them. Nonetheless, we recognize that the challenges Latinx gay and bisexual men face in American society often intersect with those experienced daily by trans people. We support Latinx trans people in their efforts to articulate their needs and we stand in solidarity with them and are ready to assist in their efforts to demand respect, safe spaces, support, and action so that all Latinx and other trans people can live long, happy, meaningful and safe lives.

¹⁰ Immigrant Legal Resource Center. 2018. <https://www.ilrc.org/overview-public-charge>.

¹¹ AIDS United, TAEP & HIV Caucus. Talking Points, AIDS Watch 2019. <https://www.aidsunited.org/resources/aidswatch-fact-sheets?docid=77>.

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Please SIGN ON as an individual or as an agency!

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