

HIV/AIDS among American Indians (AI) and Alaska Natives (AN) in Alaska

Statistics

- American Indians and Alaska Natives are the largest minority population in Alaska, representing 16% of the state's total population, yet they made up 50% of all AIDS cases in 2005 (1).
- As of December 31, 2004, 79 AI/AN with HIV/AIDS have died, and 149 are presumed to be living with HIV/AIDS (2).

Primary mode of transmission

- Through 2004, 228 AI/ANs have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 163 cases were male, and male-to-male sexual contact represented the largest transmission category. Heterosexual contact was the leading risk factor among the 65 female cases (2).

Risk Factors

There are multiple risk factors that contribute to high rates of HIV. Of these, two health risk factors, substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases and one general risk factor, poverty, is highlighted, since all three are universally prominent in most AI and AN and communities.

- Alaska has consistently had the highest rates of chlamydia in the nation. In 2003, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest rate of chlamydia and the 2nd highest rate of gonorrhea (2, 3). The rate of chlamydia was greatest among AI/AN females, with the rate being more than 4 times greater than that of AI/AN males (2).
- Substance abuse is a significant risk factor for HIV transmission in Alaska. Alaska had the largest proportion of AI/AN admissions to substance abuse centers in 2002 (4). Forty-seven percent of all admissions to substance abuse centers in Alaska were AI/ANs (4).
- Poverty increases an individual's risk for HIV transmission by limiting access to education, HIV testing, and healthcare. Approximately 20% of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Alaska live below the poverty level, compared to 9% of the state's general population (5).

Surveillance

- Alaska is among the 33 areas whose data is included in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's HIV/AIDS Annual Surveillance Report, because the state has been reporting HIV by name since 1999. HIV data from states that implemented confidential name-based HIV reporting after 1999 are excluded from the analysis of HIV/AIDS cases (6).
 - Although misclassification often contributes to the underestimation of HIV/AIDS cases for Natives in other states, studies have indicated that misclassification is not a major problem in Alaska. The Native population in Alaska is large; thus, there are many healthcare providers that are dedicated to serving only Natives (7).
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Ryan White CARE Act

- Although American Indians and Alaska Natives made up nearly one quarter of all HIV/AIDS cases in Alaska, 0% of the AIDS Drug Assistance Program clients in Alaska were Native in 2004; however 22% of all clients receiving other Title II services were AI/AN in 2001 (8).

Additional Resources

- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Epidemiology, AIDS Bulletin: [http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/catlist.jsp?cattype=Acquired+Immune+Deficiency+Syndrome+\(AIDS\)](http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/catlist.jsp?cattype=Acquired+Immune+Deficiency+Syndrome+(AIDS)).
- Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Epidemiology, Sexually Transmitted Diseases Bulletin: <http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins/catlist.jsp?cattype=Sexually+Transmitted+Diseases>.
- National Native American AIDS Prevention Center: www.nnaapc.org; 303-542-2036.

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