



Voices of Immigrants in Action

VIA's mission is to promote dynamic communication addressing the emerging issues of the Hispanic immigrant communities; mobilizing a multi-level response to factors affecting HIV/AIDS transmission in Hispanic Immigrant communities in the rural South.



The Hispanic Community's Perspectives on HIV/AIDS

22%

Knew someone infected with HIV

79%

Recommend local HIV prevention campaigns

If HIV continues to increase in the Hispanic community it could become a catastrophe for all of us.

32-year old,
Mexican woman, FL

With an epidemic of HIV in the community, we would have a bad reputation as Hispanics and we'd have more probability of getting infected too.

14-year old
Mexican youth, FL

An increase of HIV in the community would mean that we will lose interest in loving others for fear of the disease.

30-year old
Mexican man, TN

--- Snapshot ---

Rural Hispanic's Perspectives on HIV/AIDS

Hispanics and HIV: There are three issues fueling the discussion of HIV/AIDS incidence as it affects Hispanic Immigrants. First, there are no statistics to quantify prevalence among the Immigrant sub-group. Secondly, Hispanic/Latinos represent 17% of new HIV infections,¹ yet only comprise 15% of the U.S. population. And, lastly, Hispanics/Latinos face notable HIV detection and access disparities. For example Hispanics/Latinos who are HIV positive are more likely to: 1) suffer from late detection, 2) have late initiation of treatment and 3) discontinue treatment prematurely compared to others living with HIV.²

Prioritizing HIV: Findings from the 2010 VIA Community Survey indicated that 22% of respondents knew of someone who was HIV positive.³ Yet, with this alarming prevalence, HIV was not identified as a health issue of greatest concern for the community. Co-occurring issues such as poverty, discrimination, lack of steady employment, school drop out and laws targeting immigrant communities diminish the significance of HIV in the community.

Greatest Impact: According to the 2010 VIA Community Survey, more than half of the community believe that youth are at greatest risk for HIV. However, among the community there is an emerging focus on the risk of infection for women (married and single), newborns, and Hispanics in general. This reflects a broader understanding of basic HIV transmission.

Alternative Approaches to Testing: Until Immigrants have access to affordable medical care and the issues of stigma are resolved, it is problematic to depend on the community accessing services in locations they do not identify as supportive to their status and needs. One in four community members recommends testing/prevention services at health fairs, farmworker associations and churches.⁴

Call to Action: There are important lessons to be learned about the need to provide data to communities. The community's perception of the importance of prioritizing the issue of HIV in the community increased from 68% to 91% with the presentation of clear, culturally relevant HIV/AIDS statistics. Twenty percent of respondents are actively engaged in educating the broader community about HIV. Seventy-nine percent recommend local HIV prevention campaigns and trainings.⁵

VIA Recommendations

Community-driven recommendations construct a bridge for both community engagement and to shift policy and programs for improved service delivery.

Rapid Testing

It is critical that Hispanic clients have the opportunity for HIV testing and the process of early detection at one visit. Assuring notification of status, initiation of treatment and increased prevention education, rapid testing should be the norm when providing services to the community.

Alternative HIV Testing Sites

In response to elevated levels of anti-immigrant rhetoric, financial strain and limited access to health services by Hispanic Immigrants in the South, testing and prevention services need to be additionally offered in community-identified sites such as churches, labor/union offices, employee housing and health fairs.

Culturally-relevant Health Information

To impact self-identification of risk for HIV infection among Hispanic Immigrants in the rural South, there needs to be greater distribution of culturally-targeted statistics and educational information on HIV transmission.

Research to Understand Prevalence

Presently, statistics don't quantify HIV/AIDS prevalence among immigrants. Therefore, participatory community-based research is urgently needed to better clarify strategic approaches to addressing the epidemic with this unique community.

Hear the VIA Voices:

View the VIA Multi-media Video

<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheRWHPorg?feature=mhum>

To receive free, bi-monthly VIA InSite Bulletins, contact us at: <http://www.via.rwhp.org/>

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Community-based Prevention Campaigns

For the public health community to impact the growing epidemic, it is essential to shift to pro-active strategies of partnership with this unique community.⁶

It is critical to respond to a key obstacle for immigrant communities—a lack of trust in services and programs that have been conceived and implemented without their involvement. Addressing this will embolden community pride, involvement and commitment to positive health behaviors,

A proven strategy is the use of peer educator/lay-health worker programs.^{7/8} Eighty percent of the community believes that community-based campaigns and outreach will give HIV the attention it deserves.⁹

"It is essential that the development of a ...program embrace the perspectives of the community."¹⁰

The direct participation of the community in the development of messages, materials and programs will increase community buy-in. It will heighten health literacy and their commitment to the integration of HIV prevention into community life.¹¹

Citations

1) CDC, 2010; 2) Levin, 2007; 3) RWHP 2010; 4) *ibid*; 5) *ibid*; 6) The White House, 2010; 7) Ritter & Hoffman, 2010; 8) Rhodes, McCoy, Vissman, Hergenrather, Foley, Alonzo, Bloom & Eng, 2011; 9) RWHP, 2010; 10) RWHP, 2010; 11) Ritter & Hoffman, 2010.

Full citations at <http://www.via.rwhp.org/citations.html>

**Data results taken from 188 in-depth interviews with Hispanic Immigrants in North Central Florida and Eastern Tennessee as part of the 2010 VIA Community Survey.*