

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Statement on National HIV Testing Day

June 27, 2009

On this 14th commemoration of National HIV Testing Day, I urge Americans to take control of their own health and protect those they love by getting tested for HIV and working to reduce HIV transmission.

One in five Americans currently living with HIV—more than 230,000 people—do not know they have the disease, and the majority of sexually transmitted infections are spread by people who are unaware of their status. But studies show that once people learn they are infected, they take steps to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others.

Despite advances in treatment, HIV remains a major threat to the health of our Nation. While its impacts are not evenly spread—infection rates are particularly high among gay and bisexual men, African Americans, and Latinos—when one of our fellow citizens becomes infected with HIV every 9½ minutes, the epidemic affects all Americans.

That is why I have pledged to develop and implement a comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) that will focus on reducing HIV incidence, increasing access to care, and reducing HIV-related health disparities. The National HIV/AIDS Strategy will also increase awareness and promote greater investment in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS in the U.S., and it will include measurable goals, timelines, and accountability mechanisms, rely on sound science, and build on programs and practices that work.

But Government can only do so much. Each of us must take responsibility for reducing our risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV and for supporting affected individuals and communities. This means getting tested for HIV and working to end the stigma and discrimination people living with HIV face. It means embracing all of our neighbors, gay and straight. And it means responding with compassion to people dealing with addictions and others issues that place them at increased risk for HIV infection. Working together, I am confident that we can stop the spread of HIV and ensure that those affected get the care and support they need.

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