



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Katherine Kurlon
Lifelong AIDS Alliance
Marketing and Communication Coordinator
206.957.1641 katherinejk@lilaa.org

THE U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC) RELEASES NEW FIGURES SHOWING A HIGHER INCIDENCE OF HIV INFECTION THAN PREVIOUSLY ESTIMATED

At the International AIDS Conference held in Mexico City this week, the CDC finally announced the new HIV incidence estimate for 2006, revealing the HIV epidemic is still pervasive in the United States and more prevention efforts are needed.

For fourteen years, the CDC estimated 40,000 new HIV infections occur each year in the United States. The new estimate was derived from surveillance and data collection in 22 states. The CDC took that data and inputted it into mathematical models in order to produce the most accurate estimate possible. The new incidence estimate (amount of new infections that occur each year) announced today at the International AIDS Conference is 56,000 infections, which is significantly higher than the previously thought 40,000. The new incidence number is a more accurate representation than the old number and doesn't necessarily mean there has been an actual increase in new infections.

What's important to realize is the incidence increase does not imply HIV and AIDS prevention efforts have failed to work. Nationally, the United States has seen a 95% decline of mother-to-child transmission cases since 1992. In addition, communities where needle exchange programs exist, the transmission of HIV among intravenous drug users has also decreased. In Seattle, Lifelong AIDS Alliance's prevention efforts have helped to keep the rate of new infections from rapidly increasing.

Currently, prevention funding makes up only 3% of domestic federal HIV and AIDS spending, and this number has not increased to account for the growing number of people in need of services, who are infected and at risk for infecting others. Unfortunately, Lifelong AIDS Alliance and other AIDS Service Organizations' (ASOs) prevention efforts are directly related to the amount of funding prevention work receives. Due to a lack of funding, the amount of prevention work has not been able to grow quickly enough to impact the steady increasing rate of infection. This has significantly impacted the HIV infection rates in African American and Hispanic communities, and also the infection rates of men who have sex with men.

The new incidence estimate is an undeniable indication we need to increase our prevention efforts. The United States must develop a comprehensive and measureable national AIDS strategy, honestly address the domestic epidemic, and how much money should be spent on prevention efforts. Lifelong's Executive Director, David Richart, and Director of Prevention and Education, Erick Seelbach, are attending the International AIDS Conference this week, where they are focusing on key research findings, successes and shortfalls in the overall response to HIV and AIDS, and especially what the CDC's new incidence number means for an ASO like Lifelong. Meanwhile, Lifelong AIDS Alliance is doing everything in its power to care for people, prevent new infections, advocate for change, and create community.

Lifelong AIDS Alliance is committed to preventing the spread of HIV, and to providing practical support services and advocating for those whose lives are affected by HIV and AIDS. LLAA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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