

**Tennessee Department of Health
HIV/AIDS/STD Section Update**

April, 2004

Helping to bridge the gap in communication

The HIV/AIDS/STD Section Update is a way to communicate new information, staff changes, and opportunities for training between quarterly meetings. If you have information that you want included in the next update, please e-mail Heather Watson at Heather.L.Watson@state.tn.us.

HIV/AIDS/STD Section

We thought that it might be useful to describe the different areas and programs in the HIV/AIDS/STD Section. The Section's goal is to identify, assist, and educate those who have or who are at risk of having HIV/AIDS/STDs in Tennessee. The Section has six areas to help meet this goal. The following provides a description of the individual areas and staff. If you need to speak with someone within the Section, please call (800) 525-2437 or (615) 741-7500.

Administration

The Administration area is responsible for overseeing all activities of the HIV/AIDS/STD Section; developing and interpreting regulations and policies; responding to requests from the Governor and legislatures; identifying and securing funding and personnel management, staff development, etc.

Staff:

Jeanee Seals
Section Chief
Mattie Rose
Secretary
Vickie Kegerise
Personnel Officer
Dan Burke
CDC Senior Public Health Advisor

Fiscal Services

The Fiscal Services area works with all programs within the HIV/AIDS/STD Section. The key responsibilities include budget preparation for grants, contract development and

monitoring, preparation of financial reports, purchasing, planning and monitoring of program expenditures, and management of the HOPWA grant.

Staff of Fiscal Services also works closely with each contractor to assure financial accountability. The area is responsible for several contracts including: HIV Prevention and Surveillance, Centers of Excellence, Ryan White Consortia, Medical Fee Services Schedule, STD Services, and Housing Opportunities for People Living with AIDS. Request for budgets, amendments, and revisions are also processed by Fiscal Services.

Staff:

Chris Freeman
Fiscal Services Officer

Ryan White Services Program

The Ryan White Services staff administers the Ryan White Care Act Title II grant by providing comprehensive medical and medically related services to persons living with HIV/AIDS in Tennessee. This program is funded by a grant from Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) under Title II of the Ryan White CARE Act. The services that are provided to these persons through contractual agreements involve health insurance coverage; HIV drug assistance; medical treatments; and the delivery of HIV-related outpatient and ambulatory health and support services, including case management, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and comprehensive treatment services.

Staff:

Del Vineyard
AIDS Support Services Program Director
Jimmy Nanney
Medical Care Services Program
Shunjerra Reed
Medical Care Services Assistant
Janet Rheume
Consortia Coordinator
Liz Garner
HDAP Coordinator

To learn more about Ryan White Services in Tennessee, please visit the website at <http://coetenn.com>.

HIV Prevention Program

The HIV Prevention Program is responsible for developing, administering, and implementing the HIV Prevention Project Grant from CDC. Prevention is directly involved with the administration and operation of the Lead Agencies, Community Based

Organizations (CBOs), Tennessee Community Planning Group (TCPG), and the Regional Community Planning Groups (RCPG) across the state.

Staff:

Bruce Popp
HIV Prevention Program Director
Heather Watson
HIV Prevention Program Administrator
Chris Drumright
Community Planning Coordinator

Surveillance and Data Management Program

The Surveillance and Data Management Program is responsible for providing information about the health of a community based on collection, analysis, and use of health data and information. The staff perform services related to core STD/HIV surveillance, HIV perinatal exposure, HIV incidence, HIV counseling and testing, and STD reporting.

Staff:

Thomas J. Shavor
Epidemiologist, Surveillance and Data Management Program Director
Dawn Craik
STD/HIV Data Analysis Coordinator
Joseph Holmes
HIV Database Management
Brian Dunkley
Programmer/Systems Administration
HIV Incidence Project
Darla Sampson
HIV Incidence Coordinator
Michael Norwood
Systems Administration Manager
Sharon Blair
Surveillance Systems Support
Michael Moseley
STD Operations
LauraLee Killingsworth
Perinatal HIV Program Coordinator
David Lundberg
CDC Public Health Advisor
STD/HIV Consultant
Lavonne Cole
CDC Public Health Advisor
STD/HIV Consultant

Field Services Program

The Field Services Program is responsible for monitoring the incidence of disease, providing assistance and service assurance, and responding to outbreaks statewide. HIV counseling and testing also falls under Field Services.

Staff:

Pam Pitts

Field Services Director

Bob Nelson

HIV Counseling/Testing Training Coordinator

Southern AIDS Coalition

The Southern AIDS Coalition was formed to advance the shared issues and develop solutions for persons living with HIV/AIDS and STDs in the southern states. The states include: Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Coalition began when a group of interested southern citizens developed the Southern States Manifesto to bring attention to the growing problem of HIV/AIDS in the south. The goals of the Coalition are to promote the development of and to assure access to core services for all persons living with and at-risk for HIV disease and STDs in the southern states. To accomplish this, there must be a change in the distribution of federal funding for southern states in relation to the rest of the nation. The Coalition has requested a supplemental appropriation to increase funding for both the Ryan White and Prevention grants in those states that are under funded. Although the chances for passage of the request are slim, the Coalition has brought the issue of HIV in the south to the nation's attention.

<http://www.southernaidscoalition.org/>

MINORITY HEALTH MONTH

The 107th Congress agreed on October 3, 2002, by [H. Con. Res. 388](#) to establish a National Minority Health Month and Health Disparities Month. The month of April is acknowledged by many states and organizations as National Minority Health Month, providing a high visibility campaign for many year round activities. In Tennessee, during this annual 30-day period, community groups, faith-based organizations, regional and local health departments, and other public and private entities may join in the promotion of activities that include health screenings, educational events, health fairs, or assessments. Examples of issues addressed by these activities are: cancer, heart disease, diabetes, adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, mental health, cultural awareness, urban, rural health needs, and gender issues.

In Tennessee the Office of Minority Health recognizes that raising the awareness level about life threatening illnesses and increasing access to affordable, available culturally competent health services is the first step in elimination of health disparities. For more information on Minority Health Month in Tennessee, contact the Office of Minority Health at (615) 741-9443 or toll free (877) 606-0089. A tool kit to assist community organizations and groups in development of an event to celebrate Minority Health Month is available at www.nmhm.org.

<http://www2.state.tn.us/health/minorityhealth/MHM.htm>

Well Project Website

The Well Project, an initiative by and for women living with HIV/AIDS, has launched a new website to serve as a comprehensive woman-specific HIV resource offering the latest information on managing the disease for infected women, health care providers, and advocates. Women are the fastest growing population of newly HIV-infected people in the United States and worldwide.

"Women with HIV/AIDS face unique challenges. The Well Project is specifically designed to identify and fill in the gaps of current information and unify the distribution of the already available, but often under-utilized resources," said Dawn Averitt, its founder and CEO.

The Web site includes fact sheets; data sets; summary slides; a searchable clinical trials database; a resource directory; and a physician network for expert discussion on treatment. The site is divided into five targeted sections: HIV, The Basics, Treatment and Trials, Diseases and Conditions, Living Well, and a Women's Center. In addition, members can participate in confidential and secure discussion boards, download advocacy tools, and receive an e-newsletter highlighting the most current information about women and HIV. For more information, go to www.thewellproject.com

"New Web Site for HIV-Positive Women," [Women's Health Weekly](#) (10.02.03)

Chlamydia: A growing concern in Tennessee

In the last year, Tennessee has seen an increase in Chlamydia infection in all age groups. The primary reason for this increase is due to the implementation of a much more sensitive test that is identifying more positives. Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that often has no symptoms; and if left untreated, can lead to permanent health problems including infertility.

April is both Chlamydia Awareness Month and Minority Health Month. Many activities are planned state wide to raise awareness for both of these important issues. All health departments will be offering Chlamydia screening in conjunction with pregnancy testing, during the month of April. Below is a list of activities planned outside the health department:

NASHVILLE

- April 20th
Urine Chlamydia Screening at the TSU Student Health Center
- April 22nd
Urine Chlamydia Screening at Kung Fu Coffee House from 6pm to 8pm
- April 23rd
Urine Chlamydia Screening at Cabaret Bar 8pm-10pm.

MEMPHIS

- Rhodes College, Lemoyne-Owen College, University of Tennessee, and University of Memphis all are planning activities, no dates set yet.

KNOXVILLE

- April 13th
Tennessee School of the Deaf testing/education
- Florence Crittendon--testing/education from 1:30-6:00

CHATTANOOGA

- 1st week in April
Urine Chlamydia Screening at the University of TN at Chattanooga
- April 7th
Urine Chlamydia Screening at Chattanooga State Technical Community College

Please contact your local health department for a complete list of activities in your area.

Pam Pitts

HIV Infection Rise Worries N.C. Officials

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) - Jonathan Perry can understand how HIV infections have spread rapidly among the black college population. Despite common knowledge of his own HIV-positive status, men who claim to be heterosexual still seek to have unprotected sex with him.

Health officials in North Carolina and across the South are disturbed by a spike in infection rates among black students more than 20 years into the AIDS epidemic. Experts attribute the rise to a potent mixture of ignorance, recklessness, homophobia and denial, and people like Perry are trying to be part of the solution.

“It's affecting the future,” says Perry, a senior at historically black Johnson C. Smith University who plans to speak at campus forums on the issue. “This is not a poor person's disease. It's not a gay person's disease. It's a human disease.”

North Carolina researchers found 84 newly infected male college students over the past three years, 73 of them black - representing 20 percent of the state's new HIV infections among 18- to 30-year-olds. The study found HIV infection among male college students jumping from six cases in 2000 to 30 in 2003.

The cases were linked to 37 North Carolina colleges, and up to a dozen related cases were found at schools in Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia.

This was the first documented outbreak of HIV on U.S. college campuses. Researchers say college students were 3.5 times more likely than nonstudents to become infected.

The actual numbers may seem small. But state health workers say a drop of food coloring in a glass of water is more noticeable than a drop in the ocean.

“You have a smaller pool of people,” says Phyllis Gray, project manager for the state's HIV/STD prevention branch. “Once you have a virus loose in a small pool of people, you're more likely to have that virus have a greater impact.”

Further reducing the pool is the finding that a large majority of the cases - 67 - involved black men who have sex with other men, but don't identify themselves as either gay or bisexual. Of those, 27 said they also had sex with women.

“And more importantly, they don't consider themselves to be at risk for HIV,” says Dr. David Jolly, an assistant professor of health education at North Carolina Central University. “And, therefore, they weren't taking the precautions they needed to ... So what that says to me is that we're not getting the message to these guys in an effective way.”

Jolly and others wonder whether there is a cultural element to this outbreak. Many point to a 2002 incident at Atlanta's Morehouse College, in which a student attacked another with a baseball bat for allegedly staring at him in the shower, as evidence of anti-gay sentiment in the black community.

“We know that it's very hard for young, gay men - period,” says Jolly. “But it's particularly hard for young, gay men of color to be out and be comfortable being out, being public about who they are. So it's not terribly surprising to me that a lot of these

guys do not identify as gay or bisexual. It's not a very safe and accepting environment for many of these guys."

Erin Bradley, a junior at Atlanta's all-female Spelman College, says that creates a dangerous atmosphere for women because they have no idea that their boyfriends could also be having sex with men.

"Within the black community, homosexuality is not something that is welcomed or even spoken about in general," says Bradley, who practices abstinence. "It's not seen necessarily as a problem. Or if it is a problem, it's real hush-hush."

Dr. Peter Leone, the lead researcher on the North Carolina study, says this outbreak has implications beyond college campuses in the South.

"What we may be looking at is more of shot gunning effect or rapid transmission within a relatively small community," says Leone, HIV medical director at the state Health Department, noting that infection rates among young black men in the state have doubled in the past two years. He calls this outbreak "the tip of the iceberg for what is probably a resurgence of HIV in young, black men. So it's really a wake-up call."

Leone says the federal government isn't doing enough to study the phenomenon or halt its progression. But the region's black institutions are stepping up to the plate.

The Morehouse School of Medicine has held HIV education sessions with black women in the Atlanta area and intends to do the same with black men. At nearby Spelman, incoming students get HIV education with their orientation from Bradley and about 40 other specially trained students who belong to SHAPE - Student Health Associates and Peer Educators.

"We try to teach everyone to just protect yourselves," the Columbus, Ohio, native says. "Because you can ask, and they can lie. ... We focus on, 'This is your life.'"

In North Carolina, Project Commit to Prevent was established to educate students at the minority-serving schools about the risks of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases - although more than half the cases identified in the study came from mainstream campuses. Students across the state have taken part in "safer sex parties" - where they eat pizza while they learn how to properly put on a condom and play games such as STD Bingo.

"Some people don't like the name, but they're really educational parties," says Lorna Harris, Commit to Prevent coordinator at North Carolina A&T in Greensboro.

Harris says many college freshman, particularly blacks from conservative church congregations, are coming from backgrounds where they were taught only abstinence. She said it is unrealistic to expect even intelligent college students to know about condoms.

“Having sex, period, is a risky deal,” says Harris, a public health nurse. “And I think that’s the message we’re trying to communicate.”

At Johnson C. Smith, the school distributed 325 “safer sex packages” on Valentine’s Day. They included two condoms, lubricant, pamphlets on HIV/AIDS - and a lollipop.

Campus counseling coordinator Maya Gibbons says attitudes at the 1,500-student school have changed in light of the study. HIV 101 is now part of freshman orientation.

Perry has noticed changes, too.

When he first arrived in the fall of 2000 after a two-year stint in the Air Force, being openly gay made him a target for harassment and even death threats.

But things started to change after 2001, when he learned he’d been infected with HIV. He had practiced “safe sex” with someone who claimed to be HIV-negative, but the condom broke.

In April 2002, the Goldsboro native revealed his status during a campus forum. The following day, his dorm’s resident adviser told him the guys had had a meeting and declared: “We want to give you props.”

Walking along the 137-year-old campus’ magnolia- and crepe myrtle-lined footpaths, the lanky, 6-foot-2 man is greeted warmly by students and faculty. Several times a month, he says, students will come to his second-floor room in Berry Hall for a fistful of the red-, orange-, black- and blue-wrapped university-issued condoms he keeps in a drawstring sack he calls his “glad bag.”

Perry, who is doing his senior thesis on homophobia and gays in the black church, says men have confided in him that they have been having unprotected sex and haven’t informed their female partners.

Whether those people are confused or just lying to themselves, he tells them they owe it to their partners to be honest.

“Maya Angelou said, ‘When you know better, you do better,’” Perry says. “They should know better ... And the way HIV-AIDS is ravaging, raping and pillaging black communities, I don’t understand why they don’t do better.”

ALLEN G. BREED

EDITOR’S NOTE: Allen G. Breed is the AP’s Southeast regional writer, based in Raleigh.

CBO Spotlight: StreetWorks

Someone patronizing a local strip club or night club. Those may seem like typical pursuits for many in Nashville on any weekend. However, for Ron Crowder and his team of volunteers, this is not a search for fun and frolic. It's a mission to prevent HIV/AIDS. Crowder founded and runs a local Community Based Organization (CBO) named StreetWorks. This CBO performs HIV prevention outreach in the Nashville area, especially with hard-to-reach and high risk populations. It also provides direct services to those already infected.

StreetWorks was started in 1997 and became incorporated in 2000. The first of his two outreach centers opened in October, 1999. Located at 1431 Jo Johnston Avenue, it is in the heart of a housing project. These low income housing areas are the perfect locals for Crowder's outreach. According to Crowder, no one was doing outreach at the times they were most needed, 6 pm to 6 am. This is when you can find many high risk youth "hanging out," stated Crowder.

Crowder's diligence has allowed him to open a second outreach center at 83 University Court. StreetWorks' goal is to open an outreach center in every housing development in the area.

This was just a dream in 1997 when Crowder first started his agency. At first, he walked the pavement alone and worked out of the trunk of his car to get out the message in these communities. Now Crowder has a team of volunteers and his two centers to assist those at risk.

"Windshield tours" are how Crowder describes the initial stage of his outreach program. He and his team drive around and identify spots where high risk youth and others congregate. They then get to know the "gatekeeper(s)" of the area and hang out with them to give them knowledge of their intentions within their community.

A gatekeeper can be anyone from a drug dealer to the local barber shop owner. These individuals are normally long-time members, with some stature, in the community.

After gaining acceptance from the gatekeeper(s), Crowder's team performs their outreach, delving out safer sex kits with prevention information, statistics on the how HIV/AIDS affects African-Americans and rates of infection. These kits also include condoms and lubricants for people to practice safer sex.

The aforementioned night clubs and strip clubs also are frequented by the outreach team, especially on weekends. On a good Friday or Saturday night, as many as 500 patrons can be reached. In the strip clubs, it is called "shoe outreach." It is called that because the only thing they are wearing are their shoes, according to Crowder. They only reach out to the employees there because of the nature of their work, not the patrons. A good night is reaching 12-15 of these ladies.

Weeknights can be slower, especially during the colder months. When the heat moves in, Crowder's squad reaches 100-200 on a good week from Sunday through Thursday nights. Crowder knows how to effectively reach out to those at risk and already infected. As an HIV positive individual himself, he can relate to those he has chosen to help. Crowder became positive in 1991. Shortly after, he began his crusade to prevent the disease plus assist those afflicted.

Besides outreach, StreetWorks provides assistance with transportation, housing, food and clothing for HIV positive persons.

"Right now, the epidemic is not going down, but we will see the fruits of our labors in the next couple of years," stated Crowder.

Crowder is positive about the effect StreetWorks has had so far. More people access their services every day and they have been successful in testing approximately 2000 individuals for HIV. Crowder has given presentations of his outreach model across the state.

Crowder puts in perspective all of StreetWorks success, noting that without collaboration from other CBOs in the state, they would not be as effective. "We are just another piece in the arsenal in the gamete of services."

So far StreetWorks armor has proven very strong in the war on HIV/AIDS and looks to have a bright future in the prevention community.

Chris Drumright

Dates of Interest

April 15 – 16	STD Update in Memphis hosted by the Memphis/Shelby County Health Department
April 22 – 23	Statewide Quarterly Meetings at the Holiday Inn Vanderbilt
April 27 – 28	HUD site visit to Tennessee to review HOPWA

Staff Changes

We would like you to join us in welcoming Mattie Rose, the HIV/AIDS/STD Section secretary. You may reach Mattie via e-mail at Mattie.Rose@state.tn.us or via phone at (615) 741 – 7500, (800) 532 – 2437. Mattie's skills and experience is a great addition to the HIV/AIDS/STD Section.

Keith Williams, the CDC Public Health Advisor for the Field Services Program, accepted a position in Atlanta with CDC. His last day was Friday, March 26, 2004. Keith's dedication to the people of Tennessee will be greatly missed. His diligence and determination will always be an inspiration to us all. The Section wishes Keith Williams and his family good fortune in all future endeavors.