

Dear Colleague,

The Florida Department of Health Bureau of HIV/AIDS is announcing the release of the 2006 Florida HIV incidence estimates based on a new and more accurate estimation methodology developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In August 2008, the CDC released a new method of estimating the incidence of HIV infections. This new methodology revealed an estimated 56,300 people were infected with HIV in the United States in 2006. This number is substantially higher and more precise than CDC's previous estimate of 40,000 new infections annually. Florida was among the 22 sites that contributed data for the national estimate.

Using CDC's methodology, the Bureau of HIV/AIDS calculates approximately 5,550 Floridians were newly infected with HIV in 2006. The new estimate indicates that 36.4 of every 100,000 Floridians aged 13 years and older were newly infected with HIV in 2006. This rate is more than 60 percent higher than the national rate of 22.8 per 100,000 population.

Florida has tracked the number of people newly diagnosed with HIV each year since 1997. Cumulatively through 2006, 37,184 HIV (not AIDS) cases have been reported in Florida, which includes 397 pediatric HIV (not AIDS) cases. However, until recently, we have been unable to distinguish recent HIV infections from those that occurred years earlier. A new laboratory test developed by CDC is able to distinguish recent from long-standing HIV infection. With the new test, CDC created the national HIV incidence surveillance system to develop the first national and state estimates of recent HIV infection.

Compared to the national estimates, Florida's most highly impacted groups are similar. In Florida, 72% of new infections in 2006 occurred in males; 48% in African Americans; 33% in persons aged 13-29 years; and 58% among men who have sex with men (MSM).

As with the national estimates, Florida's HIV infection rates per 100,000 population demonstrate significant disparities. Most notable is the disproportionate impact of incident infections on racial/ethnic groups. In Florida, the rate of new infections per 100,000 population in 2006 among African Americans (123.7) was more than six times the rate among whites (18.8) and nearly four times the rate among Hispanics (32.0). Although African Americans comprise 14% of Florida's population, they accounted for 48% of new HIV infections in 2006.

Over half of Florida's new infections in 2006 occurred among MSM, a group that has historically been heavily affected by HIV/AIDS. Among MSM, 41 percent of new infections occurred among whites, 34 percent among blacks, and 25 percent among Hispanics.

The 2006 Florida HIV incidence estimates highlight the populations currently at greatest risk for HIV infection. The estimates will help us focus our prevention strategies and allocate funding accordingly. As this is the first year we are able to calculate estimates based on this new method, it will be important to track Florida's trends and adapt our prevention strategies as warranted.

For additional information on HIV incidence surveillance in Florida, please visit the bureau's website at: www.FloridaAids.org and click on Incidence Surveillance. Questions about HIV incidence data in Florida can be directed to Stefanie White at Stefanie_White@doh.state.fl.us or (850) 245-4444 ext 2568.