

HIGHLIGHTS

- American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) make up about 10% of New Mexico's population. In 2007, they accounted for 12% of newly reported HIV/AIDS cases (Figure 1).
- In New Mexico, there have been a cumulative total of 351 cases of HIV/AIDS among AI/AN, including 109 who have died.
- Of the 3,388 people living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico, 7% are AI/AN. AI/AN have the 4th highest rate (118 per 100,000 population) of all racial/ethnic groups living with HIV/AIDS in the state.

THE HIV EPIDEMIC AMONG AI/AN

AI/AN comprise 1.5% of the total U.S. population. While AI/AN made up less than 1% of the total number of HIV/AIDS cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 2005, they had the 3rd highest rate of HIV/AIDS diagnoses, following African Americans and Hispanics. Since 1995, the rate of AIDS diagnoses in AI/AN has been higher than for Whites.

While the number of AI/AN diagnosed remains small, the numbers may be misleading due to racial misclassification. Studies have shown that 3% of AI/AN in Alaska with HIV/AIDS and 56% of AI/AN in Los Angeles with AIDS were classified as being another race.¹ In contrast, the surveillance system in New Mexico has been shown to be highly sensitive in correctly identifying the race of AI/AN diagnosed with HIV/AIDS; race was misclassified in less than 1% of all cases.²

HIV AMONG AI/AN IN NEW MEXICO

The majority of AI/AN both newly reported with HIV in 2007 and those who are currently living with HIV/AIDS reside in the Northwest region of the state (Figure 2). Like other racial/ethnic groups, the mode of exposure most commonly reported among AI/AN living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico is men who have sex with men (MSM, 67%); Figure 3 shows how this includes MSM and MSM who inject drugs (MSM/IDU).

Among AI/AN women living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico, over half (57%) reported heterosexual sex as their mode of exposure; this is similar to all women statewide (54%) and Hispanic women (58%), but a little higher than White women (50%). Twenty percent of AI/AN women living with HIV/AIDS reported IDU compared to 28% for all women statewide, 31% for White women, and 23% for Hispanic women.

Almost one-quarter (22%) of AI/AN living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico are known to be co-infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV). Forty-eight percent are known to be HCV negative and 30% have an unknown HCV status. In comparison, 18% of all people living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico are known to be co-infected with HCV, 30% are known to be HCV negative, and 53% have an unknown HCV status.

PREVENTION

The New Mexico Department of Health HIV Prevention Program funds providers to deliver HIV prevention interventions specific to AI/AN living in urban areas, pueblos, and the Navajo Nation. Most organizations are now using evidence-based models from the CDC. A number of the programs are shown to be appropriate for Native Americans including:

- The Many Men/Many Voices (3M) intervention targets gay and bisexual men and transgenders, including MSM that do not identify as gay or bisexual.
- Healthy Relationships is a multisession, small-group, skills-building program for men and women living with HIV/AIDS.
- Comprehensive Risk Counseling Services is an intensive, individual level, client-centered risk reduction intervention targeting people at high risk for HIV infection or transmission.

REFERENCES

1. CDC HIV/AIDS Fact Sheet: HIV/AIDS among American Indians and Alaska Natives. June 2007. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/factsheets/aian.htm>
2. Leman R, Bertolli J, and Cheek J. Completeness of HIV/AIDS reporting among American Indians: New Mexico 1980-2000. September 2001, unpublished.

