



## World's AIDS Day – December 1, 2011

Thursday, December 1st is World's AIDS Day. The World Health Organization established World AIDS Day in 1988. This year marked 30 years since the CDC's MMWR reported the first cases of AIDS in the U.S. Take a closer look at the basics and how Virginia is continually working on educating, testing, treating and preventing HIV and AIDS.

### The Basics

**What is HIV?** HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. This is the virus that can cause AIDS if left untreated. The virus is passed by contact with certain body fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk.

**What is AIDS?** AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and is a condition in which the body's immune system is so badly damaged by HIV that it is left vulnerable to infection and certain types of cancers.

**How is HIV passed from one person to another?** People get HIV from coming in contact with infected body fluids such as blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk. Most of the time, people are infected with HIV through unprotected sexual contact, injection drug use, or mother-to-child transmission.

### The Scope of HIV/AIDS in Virginia

About 21,000 Virginians are known to be living with HIV/AIDS. This represents a continual increase over time as people are living longer with the disease and new infections are occurring at a relatively stable rate. For the past 6 years, the number of newly reported HIV/AIDS cases has also remained consistent. The discordance observed between HIV/AIDS reports and persons living with HIV signifies the increasing need to focus resources and ensure appropriate HIV surveillance, prevention and care-related services.

**HIV/AIDS Surveillance:** The HIV/AIDS Surveillance program encourages ongoing and systematic collection of HIV/AIDS reporting from public and private providers and laboratories across the state. Surveillance activities and associated epidemiologic data are critical to effectively monitor the HIV/AIDS epidemic and to target delivery of HIV prevention, care and treatment in Virginia and the U.S. Additional programs collect and/or evaluate HIV client data that are key to better planning for resource allocation and evaluation of care and prevention initiatives.

**HIV Prevention Services:** More than 100,000 Virginians received HIV prevention services in 2007. The Virginia HIV, STD & Viral Hepatitis Hotline received approximately 6,000 inquiries for information, testing and treatment. In the past two years, Virginia has launched campaigns to ensure that pregnant women receive an HIV test and to promote understanding of partner services, in which partners of persons with HIV are notified and offered testing and treatment. HIV testing is available through state and federal sources. All 35 health districts in Virginia offer free HIV testing, prevention counseling and referral services. Twelve sites are also funded to provide anonymous testing. In the U.S., the rate of HIV transmission has declined by 89% since the peak of the epidemic. This represents major successes in HIV testing and prevention.

**HIV Care Services:** Federal Ryan White (RW) Program funding addresses critical gaps in care for low income, un-/under-insured Virginians with HIV. In 2007, RW provided access to HIV-related medical care for 4,771 individuals. Virginia provides state funds to supplement federal funding for HIV services, as well as to meet match requirements for RW.

Article information provided by: <http://aids.gov> and [www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DiseasePrevention/)

[www.commonhealth.virginia.gov](http://www.commonhealth.virginia.gov)

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