



HIV/AIDS Awareness Days Event Planning Guide

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services strongly encourages organizations and individuals to consider engaging their community in observing **HIV/AIDS Awareness Days**.

This guide contains suggestions and resources to assist in planning and implementing a broad array of events and activities. Activities should be tailored to meet the specific needs of your local community. You know your community best, and you know what messages it most needs to hear.

We urge you to use these ideas to plan an activity that serves as a local outreach opportunity. Planning an event with other organizations is an excellent way to help prevent HIV from spreading further in your community, and to build a local network that responds year-round to the epidemic.

I. Getting Started

These tips will help get your plans off to a strong start.

- Think about how you can raise awareness in your community in a way that reaches those most at risk and affected by the epidemic. Who is most at risk? Where are they? What motivates them to connect with health care and education?
- Think about who you want to attend your event. What type of events have they attended in the past. What type of event would draw the most interest?
- Ask yourself how the unique voices in your community can add meaning to your plans. For example, health care providers, youth and other community members can add vital facets to community dialog about the epidemic. How can your plans incorporate their knowledge, skills, interests and voices? How can you involve them in the planning process?
- Don't reinvent the wheel. Visit AIDS.gov often for fact sheets, graphics, posters, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), other tools and templates. This site links you to the lead national partner organizations for all the Days.
- Use the national theme for each Day. This reinforces common messages and can increase your visibility. Visit AIDS.gov to find out the theme for each Day and to find links to downloadable materials using the theme.
- Contact local AIDS service organizations (ASOs), health departments, HIV prevention community planning groups, local leaders and the national partners to identify past events, get advice and to learn of new plans, themes and materials. Is there an event in your area which you can help support?
- Look beyond the local ASOs, health departments, and HIV prevention community groups to other organizations who may want to get involved to increase their response to the epidemic. For example, you can reach out to large employers, faith institutions, insurers, pharmaceutical firms, planning boards and schools.
- Consider how to incorporate new media (blogs, social networking sites, podcasts, etc.) into your plans. How can new media help you reach your target audience? Look at the new media section of AIDS.gov for short introductions to many of these tools. Visit blog.AIDS.gov for ideas for using them.
- Plan from the start to incorporate evaluation and documentation.
- Build community support. Offer tools to help individuals build partnerships and coalitions to work together to support Awareness Day activities.
- Plan to reach out to the media. Develop news releases, PSAs, Op-Eds, and letters to the editor. Visit AIDS.gov and the sites of the lead national partner organizations for sample tools.

II. Activity Ideas

Among the possibilities:

- Hold a public forum or town hall meeting to engage in dialogue about the impact of HIV/AIDS in the community. Include the perspectives of people living with HIV. Hold a reception for participants.
- Encourage your local newspapers or school districts to sponsor related essay, poetry, and/or poster contests.
- Hold a news conference with city officials (e.g., Mayor, health department director) to raise public awareness of the impact HIV/AIDS has had in your community. Invite other local public officials (health department officers and community leaders) to talk about the challenges in the response to the epidemic.
- Encourage the Mayor or other city officials to visit a local HIV/AIDS service organization or community-based organization (CBO) to discuss their activities and plans.
- Hold a cultural or faith-based event with speakers who can call attention to the epidemic in your community.
- Submit an HIV/AIDS awareness editorial or a letter to the editor to all of your local newspapers, addressing the specific needs in your community.
- Encourage your local radio stations to broadcast Public Service Announcements leading up to the specific Awareness Day.
- Ask your Mayor or other local elected official to send a letter/memorandum to all city employees (often the largest single employer in any area) about the specific Awareness Day, and to inform them of available city services (e.g., HIV testing and/or counseling sites).
- Request a proclamation from your civic, state or tribal leadership.
- Offer free HIV testing at a special event. Incentives will bring people in.
- Get tested yourself to set an example, or ask a local celebrity to take the test.
- Tell event participants about the importance of knowing one's HIV status. Share information on local testing resources. Promote www.hivtest.org and the KNOWIT campaign.
- Organize a health fair to educate people about HIV/AIDS, testing options and other health issues.
- Organize an annual reception or dinner to honor a local leader and/or organization for their HIV work.

III. Promoting Your Activities

- Contact local media to:
 - encourage them to develop a story on the impact of HIV/AIDS in your community and/or let them know of your availability to be interviewed;
 - offer a local expert to be a guest on locally produced "morning" shows and/or radio call-in shows; and,
 - issue a media advisory and press release to encourage coverage of your event.
- Register your events on the national partner's site for the specific Day.
- Add your events to online and print community calendars. Utilize TV, local community centers, neighborhood markets to post awareness events or activities.
- Put banner ads, logos, buttons and event information on your organization's website. Ask your partners to post too.
- Highlight the specific observance of the Day in your community newsletter and on list serves, bulletin boards, and/or web pages.
- Add event information to your organization's social networking pages (i.e., Facebook and MySpace). Ask your community partners to do the same.
- Add a message to your email signature and ask others to do the same.

IV. Follow-Up

Strong follow-up sets the stage for continued success and increasing involvement. Here are some key steps:

- Complete the evaluation as requested by the national leadership organizations that support the Day.
- Send news releases to all members of the media who didn't attend your events.
- Send thank you letters to those who attended or contributed to your activities. Include a summary of what was achieved.
- Prepare a follow-up article for your newsletter and board members as well as for community publications. Include photos, brochures or flyers of the event.
- Keep a roster of the leadership, media, and community invited, with appropriate notes so you can follow up for next year's activities. Note your successes and challenges for future reference.
- Share your best practices. Some of the national lead organizations' sites have sections where you can submit text to showcase what you did and allow others to extract ideas.

V. Individual Action

We have found that the Awareness Day events are most successful when participants are encouraged to take *individual* action.

There are many ways individuals can take action in the response to HIV/AIDS:

- Get tested for HIV.
- Talk with your health care provider about your risks for HIV.
- Learn about the risk factors for acquiring HIV.
- Decide not to engage in high risk behaviors.
- Practice safer methods to prevent HIV.
- Talk about HIV prevention with family, friends, and colleagues.
- Tell people about why this Day is important to you.
- Talk about the epidemic's impact on your community with friends and family.
- Provide support to people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Volunteer at a local organization that serves people living with HIV.
- Ask community leaders to increase their response to addressing the epidemic.
- Visit AIDS.gov and other key sites for more information on prevention, treatment and research.
- Get involved with or host an event for the Awareness Day in your community.
- Help fund an event for the Day or support it with in-kind donations.

Visit AIDS.gov for information from the Federal government about HIV/AIDS prevention, testing, treatment, research, and using new media in response to HIV/AIDS and for links to the national Awareness Day partners.