

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Women make up about 51% of New Mexico's population. Of the 160 new cases of HIV/AIDS reported in 2008, they accounted for 12%.
- In New Mexico, there have been a cumulative total of 593 cases of HIV/AIDS among women, including 150 who have died.
- Of the 3,658 people living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico, 12% (443) are women.

## THE HIV EPIDEMIC AMONG WOMEN

Worldwide, women make up 43% of people over the age of 15 living with HIV/AIDS. The feminization of HIV has occurred rapidly. An estimated 42% of pregnant women in Swaziland are HIV positive. Of the estimated 17.3 million women living with HIV, the majority (76%) live in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>1</sup>

In the U.S., women make up about 25% of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses.<sup>2</sup> AIDS is the leading cause of death among African American women aged 25-34 years.<sup>1</sup>

Gender inequality and the low status of women are two of the principle forces driving the HIV pandemic worldwide. Women are disproportionately burdened with the consequences of the HIV epidemic because, in general, responses to HIV and AIDS have not adequately addressed social, cultural, and economic factors that put women at risk for infection. Women have less access to education and information about HIV and tend to shoulder most of the caretaking duties for people suffering from HIV/AIDS and related illnesses.<sup>1</sup>

## HIV AMONG WOMEN IN NEW MEXICO

Since 1995, on average, about 21 women are newly diagnosed with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico each year;

women comprise about 12%-15% of all newly reported cases. Among women living with HIV, only 20% were concurrently diagnosed compared to 58% for all cases across the state. In 2008, African American (AA) females had the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 232 per 100,000 compared to American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) women who had the second highest of 55 per 100,000. However, the largest proportions of women living with HIV/AIDS are Whites (44%) followed by Hispanics (32%) (Figure 1).

Among women living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico, over half (51%) reported heterosexual sex as their mode of exposure followed by 27% with injection drug use (IDU). In contrast, heterosexual sex was the fourth most reported mode of exposure among men with HIV/AIDS. More White women (50%) reported IDU as their mode of exposure to HIV than other race/ethnicities while more African American and Hispanic women (41% and 34%, respectively) reported heterosexual sex as their risk (Figures 2a, 2b).

Almost one-quarter (23%) of women living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico are known to be co-infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV); 33% are known to be HCV negative, and 44% have an unknown HCV status. Statewide, 18% of all people living with HIV/AIDS are known to be co-infected with HCV, 30% are known to be HCV negative, and 53% of people living with HIV/AIDS in New Mexico have an unknown HCV status.

## PREVENTION

The New Mexico Department of Health HIV Prevention Program funds providers across the state to deliver HIV prevention interventions to at-risk populations. Hetero-

groups to be reached, including heterosexual women who engage in specific risky behaviors.

Current HIV prevention contractors deliver some services to HAR. Eight agencies, which make up two thirds of all providers, deliver such programs in most regions of New Mexico. Organizations are now using evidence-based models, many of which were specifically designed for heterosexual women.

- The SISTA model was designed to build self-esteem and skills among Hispanic and African American women.
- The Woman to Woman model was designed in New Mexico to serve women at greatest risk, including those who inject drugs or have a history of being in jail or prison.
- Comprehensive Risk Counseling Services is an intensive, individual level, client-centered risk reduction intervention targeting people at high risk for HIV infection.
- VOICES/VOCES is a single-session model that uses a video to promote condom use and skills. Voices can be used with teens or adults in a variety of settings.

**REFERENCES**

1. UNAIDS. The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. Keeping the Promise: An Agenda for Action on Women and AIDS, May 2006.
2. CDC HIV/AIDS Fact Sheet. HIV/AIDS Among Women, August 2008.

Figure 1. Women living with HIV/AIDS by race/ethnicity, New Mexico, 2008

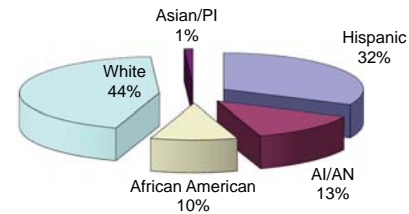


Figure 2a. IDU women living with HIV/AIDS by race/ethnicity, New Mexico, 2008

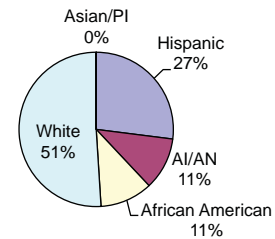
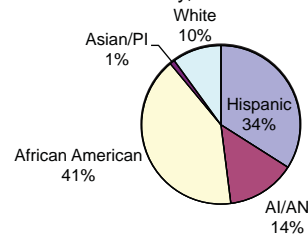


Figure 2b. Heterosexual women living with HIV/AIDS by race/ethnicity, New Mexico, 2008



**FOOTNOTES**

Race/ethnicity categories: White, Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN), African American (AA), Asian/Pacific Islander (Asian/PI).