



National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day 2009 Statement from the National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network

February 7, 2009: The National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network (NBNWHAN) urges every Black woman and adolescent girl to get tested for HIV and know their HIV status. NBNWHAN calls upon our current administration to take immediate actions to improve the lives of Black women, adolescent girls, and their families living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Last August, the CDC released the first national HIV incidence report that showed that an estimated 56,300 new HIV infections occurred in 2006. The data further showed that the majority of these new infections occurred among Black Americans. NBNWHAN believes that 56,300 new infections reaffirms that Black Americans are most impacted by HIV/AIDS in the United States. In fact, the Black community, particularly women, adolescent girls, and their families find themselves in a national state of public health emergency, with an HIV prevalence rate that is 18 times the rate of white women, with no support from government in the form of a National AIDS Strategy.

"I encourage every woman, in particular Black women, and adolescent girls, to get tested for HIV and know their HIV status," said Barbara Joseph, Co-Chair of the NBNWHAN. Ms. Joseph continued, "Getting tested for HIV is by far one of the most important things that we as Black women on the front line can encourage our Sisters to do. HIV infection was the leading cause of death for black women 25 to 34, the 3rd leading cause of death for black women 35 to 44, and the 4th leading cause of death for black women 45 to 54." "It's no joke; this disease is devastating our communities".

According to the CDC, women account for more than one quarter of all new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in the United States [1]. Historically, women have been underrepresented in HIV/AIDS research, and underserved in HIV/AIDS treatment, care, and prevention efforts. This neglect of women's complex health issues has led, in part, to a dramatic rise in the number of women living with HIV, and an alarming increase in AIDS-related deaths among women. During 2005, 35% of all HIV-positive women and adolescent girls in the US converted to AIDS in less than 12 months from receiving an initial HIV diagnosis. As a result, the proportion of women in the U.S. living with HIV/AIDS has more than tripled since the beginning of the epidemic [2].

"The decrease in mother-to-child HIV transmission is a public health achievement in HIV prevention in the United States", stated Ivy Turnbull, Chair of Public Policy for NBNWHAN. "This success was realized through collaboration across government agencies, partnerships with state and local health departments, providers, and communities. National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day presents us with an opportunity to begin to closely examine the model used to decrease mother-to-child transmission and incorporate those measures in formulating a response for specialized HIV prevention, treatment and care, research strategies, and programs to address the immediate and ongoing health needs of Black women and adolescent girls and their families impacted by HIV/AIDS."

The NBNWHAN has been successful in working with many advocacy groups as well as local and national organizations to garner support for women's issues in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Founded in 2007 the NBNWHAN has worked to influence the development of research initiatives and resources that will have a positive impact on program development and design for women and produce scientific based evidence of success. The NBNWHAN is a community led initiative born out of the urgent need for African American women to set and implement a national HIV/AIDS agenda for African American women in the areas of prevention, care, treatment, public policy and funding for all African American women living with or at risk of HIV and AIDS and their families.

References:

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Fact Sheet HIV/AIDS Among Women
<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/women/resources/factsheets/women.htm>

²Cases of HIV Infection and AIDS in the United States and Dependent Areas, 2006. Table 2: Time to an AIDS diagnosis after a diagnosis of HIV infection, by selected characteristics, 2005—33 states and 5 U.S. dependent areas with confidential name-based HIV infection reporting.
<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/surveillance/resources/reports/2006report/table2.htm>