



Life Foundation
FIGHTING AIDS IN HAWAII AND THE PACIFIC

For Immediate Release:

Americans' Sense of Urgency Towards HIV/AIDS Epidemic Dramatically Declined

A new survey by Kaiser Family Foundation finds that Americans' sense of urgency about HIV/AIDS has fallen, even though the epidemic is much larger than previously thought

Honolulu, HI- May 14, 2009- Less than a year after the CDC announced the U.S. HIV epidemic is much larger than previously thought, a new survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation finds that the public's sense of urgency is down, even among those at high risk for the disease.

In 2008, the CDC recalculated the size of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and announced that there were 40 percent more new HIV infections each year than previously believed – a total of approximately 56,000 each year.

“The ‘emotional urgency’ associated with AIDS has declined in the past decade due, in large part, to well publicized good news – at least in the U. S.,” says Paul Groesbeck, Executive Director of the Honolulu based Life Foundation. “ Effective medications have greatly reduced the AIDS-related death rate and transmission of HIV from infected mothers to babies is almost nonexistent in Hawaii. However, while public concern about AIDS is waning, AIDS itself is as robust as ever. Life Foundation’s HIV testing program identified five young people in the month of April who are HIV positive. We must not become complacent and should continue to fight AIDS on all fronts until it is truly defeated.”

Key findings in the new survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation include:

- The share of Americans naming HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation dropped precipitously from 44 percent in 1995 to 17 percent in 2006 and to six percent now.
- The share of those ages 18-29 who say they are personally very concerned about becoming infected with HIV declined from 30 percent in 1997 to 17 percent today; personal concern among young African Americans declined from 54 percent to 40 percent over the same time period.
- More than half (53%) of non-elderly adults say they have been tested for HIV, including 19 percent who say they were tested in the past year. Testing is most common among adults under the age of 30, with three in ten young adults and nearly half (47%) of young African Americans reporting having been tested in the past year. However, reported testing rates for all these groups have not changed much in the past decade.

Half of the public thinks that the federal government is spending too little on domestic HIV/AIDS, while just five percent say it spends too much. More than a third (36%) of Americans say they have personally donated money to an HIV/AIDS-related charity, including nearly half (45%) of African Americans, and there is confidence that new efforts in prevention will make a difference.

Free and anonymous HIV testing is available at Life Foundation. No appointment is necessary. Visit www.lifefoundation.org or call 521-AIDS for more information.

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