



National Alliance on Mental Illness Help Line  
 1-800-950-6264 <https://www.nami.org/help>  
 Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800.273.TALK  
 Translifeline 877.565.8860  
 Veteran's Crisis Line 800.273.8255 *press 1*  
 Pastoral Care—Pastor Jim Alexander 623.792.5295  
<https://thepalms.org/Tools2Thrive>

World AIDS Day (December 1) and International Day of Persons with Disabilities (December 3) are observed during the month of December. While only one day is dedicated to each of these events on the National Health Awareness Calendar for 2021, as we seek to be a WISE Congregation for Mental Wellness, perhaps it is a good idea to delve deeper to understand how we can welcome, include, support and engage individuals and families who are affected by these conditions.

The theme for World AIDS Day 2021 is “End Inequities. End AIDS” in 2020, an estimated number of people living with HIV was 37,700,000; 680,000 people died from HIV-related causes; 1,500,000 people were newly infected, and only 73% of people living with HIV received lifelong antiretroviral therapy. HIV remains a major public health issue. Although the world has made significant progress in the treatment of the virus, important global targets for 2020 were not met. Division, disparity, and disregard for human rights are the top reasons why HIV has been allowed to remain a global health crisis. COVID-19 is exacerbating inequities and disruption of services, making the lives of many people living with HIV more challenging.

## How can the members of our faith communities be WISE regarding HIV?

### Causes and Effects of HIV STIGMA and DISCRIMINATION

HIV stigma is rooted in a fear of HIV. Many of our ideas about HIV come from the HIV images that first appeared in the early 1980s. There are still misconceptions about how HIV is transmitted and what it means to live with HIV today. The lack of information and awareness, combined with outdated beliefs, lead people to fear getting HIV. Additionally, many people think of HIV as a disease that only certain groups get. This leads to negative value judgements about people who are living with HIV.

HIV stigma and discrimination affect the emotional well-being and mental health of people living with HIV. People living with HIV often internalize the stigma they experience and begin to develop a negative self-image. They may fear they will be discriminated against or judged negatively if their HIV status is revealed.

“Internalized stigma” or “self-stigma” happens when a person takes in the negative ideas and stereotypes about people living with HIV and start to apply them to themselves. HIV internalized stigma can lead to feelings of shame, fear of disclosure, isolation, and despair. These feelings can keep people from getting tested and treated for HIV.

#### Help STAMP OUT the STIGMA

HIV stigma is negative attitudes and beliefs about people with HIV. It is the prejudice that comes with labeling an individual as part of a group that is believed to be socially unacceptable.

Here are a few examples:

- Believing that only certain groups of people can get HIV
- Making moral judgments about people who take steps to prevent HIV transmission
- Feeling that people deserve to get HIV because of their choices

#### Help DISMANTLE the DISCRIMINATION

While stigma refers to an attitude or belief, discrimination is the behaviors that result from those attitudes or beliefs. HIV discrimination is the act of treating people living with HIV differently than those without HIV.

Here are a few examples:

- A health care professional refusing to provide care or services to a person living with HIV
- Refusing casual contact with someone living with HIV
- Socially isolating a member of a community because they are HIV positive
- Referring to people as HIVers or Positives

## Talk About HIV

Talking openly about HIV can help normalize the subject. It also provides opportunities to correct misconceptions and help others learn more about HIV. But be mindful of how you talk about HIV and people living with HIV. The *Let's Stop HIV Together* [stigma language guide](https://bit.ly/31cy3ij) can help. Access it online: <https://bit.ly/31cy3ij>

## Take Action

We can all help end HIV stigma through our words and actions in our everyday lives. Lead others with your supportive behaviors. Check out the *Let's Stop HIV Together* [stigma scenarios](https://bit.ly/32QCeRf) (<https://bit.ly/32QCeRf>) for tips on what you can do when you witness stigma. You can also make a pledge to stop HIV stigma by downloading a [pledge card](https://bit.ly/3pcz4Pc) (<https://bit.ly/3pcz4Pc>)

## Educate Yourself

[Watch this helpful video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oX_WjkGT04) ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oX\\_WjkGT04](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oX_WjkGT04))

**Did you know?** According to the Phoenix Eligible Area Planning Council Survey conducted in 2019, in conjunction with the Ryan White Planning Council, documented that more than 59% of HIV prevalence and incidence are age 45 and older. According to the same survey, of the 76 responses received from people 65-69 years-old, 14.15% were living with HIV. Of the 38 responses received from 70-79 year-old, 7.08% were living with HIV. World wide, about 13% of people don't know their status and should be tested.