

# World AIDS Day Manual



**How high school students can organize HIV/AIDS education programs to commemorate World AIDS Day**

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This manual is designed to provide instruction for high school students to become involved with the activities of World AIDS Day, which is commemorated every year on December 1, and to increase students' awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention.

There are four main points we need to get across to students:

- *People can catch Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) through unprotected sex and the sharing of needles, or by exchanging blood in "blood brother" games or ingesting it in "vampire cults."*
- *If someone does catch HIV, due to advances in treatment it is no longer a death sentence.*
- *People should get tested every time they have unprotected sex, share needles, or engage in other such risky behaviors.*
- *Even if HIV is not a death sentence, we must stop the spread of the disease because so far there is no cure, only anti-viral treatments that may have side effects and will complicate your life. If you are at risk, you owe it to your partner to get tested.*

### **History of World AIDS Day**

World AIDS Day was created in 1988 by staffers at the World Health Organization. Beginning in 1997 UNAIDS took over the planning and promotion. Each year, the event has a new theme:



- 1988 - Communication
- 1989 - Youth
- 1990 - Women and AIDS
- 1991 - Sharing the Challenge
- 1992 - Community Commitment
- 1993 - Act
- 1994 - AIDS & the Family
- 1995 - Shared Rights, Shared Responsibilities
- 1996 - One World, One Hope
- 1997 - Children living in a World with AIDS
- 1998 - Force for Change: World AIDS Campaign with Young People
- 1999 - Listen, Learn, Live: World AIDS Campaign with Children and Young People
- 2000 – AIDS: Men Make a Difference

- 2001 - I Care, Do You?
- 2002 - Stigma & Discrimination
- 2003 - Stigma & Discrimination
- 2004 - Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS
- 2005 - Stop AIDS; Keep the Promise
- 2006 - Stop AIDS; Keep the Promise - Accountability
- 2007 - Stop AIDS; Keep the Promise - Leadership
- 2008 - Stop AIDS; Keep the Promise – Lead- Empower- Deliver
- 2009 - Universal Access and Human Rights
- 2010 - Universal Access and Human Rights: New Faces, New Challenges
- 2011 – This is the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the AIDS epidemic. A theme hasn't yet been announced.



### **Cultural Connections**

An effective World Aids Day program shouldn't overlook the fact that the topic of HIV infection can be a controversial one, especially among people of some cultures. In Nigeria, for example, both Christians and Muslims tend to see immoral behavior as the cause of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This affects Nigerian attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS and toward HIV prevention efforts. In some cultures, almost any talk about sex is taboo.

The student body of a typical high school will include people of several cultures. At Williamsville North High School, for example, there are Caucasians of various ethnic groups, African Americans, Asian Americans (including Indians and Chinese), and foreign exchange students. On-campus clubs that are based around these communities can be helpful in making sure your World AIDS Day programming is culturally sensitive, and can help you promote your event. At Williamsville North there are groups like the Japanese Club, foreign language clubs – even a Cooking Club that includes learning about various ethnic cuisines. We recommend reaching out to such clubs, getting them involved in World AIDS Day activities.

It might also be possible to start a new club centralized around AIDS education, especially if your school does not have a Gay Straight Alliance that might already be involved in HIV prevention. Such a club would need a teacher willing to stay after school as a club adviser. To attract members, it would be good if early in the fall semester you could get it mentioned during the typical morning loudspeaker proclamations to get students interested in joining.

Even if clubs are not specifically designed for teaching people about AIDS or cultures, they still might want to participate in World AIDS Day. For example, the Guitar Club at Williamsville North set up a collection for AIDS causes at their recitals.

Think about similar piggybacking opportunities. A club that has a bake sale could ask their customers if they would like to donate money to the AIDS fund, which they could then give to an organization such as the Niagara County AIDS Task Force that focuses on HIV prevention and education. Club leaders might be more receptive if you could provide something that would help, such as candles, ribbons or posters.

### **Overcoming resistance**

If some students for cultural reasons are apprehensive about supporting a World AIDS Day initiative, there are a couple things you can do.

1. Put out a memorial basket for people who want to remember their deceased loved ones. In order to get everyone to participate, make it known that people can write a remembrance whether or not their loved ones died of AIDS-related causes.
2. If a certain club has a particular target culture emphasis, really try to get the club to participate without making them feel uncomfortable. If people in the target culture see their friends in the club participating, they may want to join in as well.
3. Have a competition for a logo for World AIDS Day. A big symbol for both AIDS and NCATF is the red ribbon. People in the art community can have fun trying to create a fancy logo for the event.



### **Planning the day's activities**

Get your group together to decide what activities you want to engage in to mark World AIDS Day. Consider a logo contest as mentioned above, or a poster contest or essay contest. Try to find a sponsor to fund rewards for the winners of such contests.

Organize some kind of fundraiser such as a dance or bake sale to assist an AIDS organization. Think about whether you want to include an educational component, such as a speaker from an HIV treatment organization. You could contact a group such as the Niagara County AIDS Task Force to get free educational materials. Ask a health-education teacher to assign an HIV research project to raise AIDS awareness.

### **Getting approval**

Typically, high school administrations need to approve of all club activities and events. They want to assure that everything is school-appropriate, which means no swear words or vulgar pictures. So be sure to send posters and activity propositions weeks in advance of World Aids Day to allow time for administrators to process them and suggest changes if they think something might be offensive. If the administration is hard to talk to, find a teacher or some other staff member to speak on your behalf. Administrators are more likely to listen to a teacher than an individual student.

### **Measuring success**

Success comes in educating students about the extent of the AIDS epidemic, about how HIV can be contracted, about treatment options, and about how to avoid HIV. This can be measured by surveying students after World AIDS Day activities have been completed. Surveys should include multiple-choice questions that ask students about their knowledge of HIV/AIDS and World AIDS Day.

Another way to gauge success is to count how many people showed up at your World AIDS Day events, maybe even how many clubs participated. This can demonstrate that your message is reaching people.

### **Conclusion**

- Build upon existing interest groups when possible. All schools will likely be willing to sponsor AIDS Day Awareness clinics, so be open minded and willing to piggyback off of programs already implemented within the school.
- Create a trustworthy group of people that will help you plan your activities.
- Be sure to plan things so that enable students of all cultures to join in the event.
- Be sure to send posters and activity propositions through administration a long time before the event.