

The Catholic Health Care System and HIV/AIDS Prevention in New York

The Catholic church is among the many religious institutions responding to the immense suffering that has accompanied the spread of HIV/AIDS. Today, it claims to provide 25 percent of all AIDS care throughout the worldⁱ through its ministries and its 110,000-plus health-care organizations.ⁱⁱ

However, by repeatedly condemning the use of condoms as part of a comprehensive prevention strategy, the Catholic hierarchy has taken a very dangerous and ultimately harmful position on preventing the spread of the disease. In addition to insisting that there is no room within Catholic theology to allow the use of condoms, officials of the Catholic church have even gone beyond their personal condemnation and cast doubts on the effectiveness of condoms in fighting AIDS.

The clearest statements representing the point of view of the Vatican were made by Archbishop Javier Lozano, who headed the Vatican delegation to the United Nations' conference on AIDS in 2001. At the meeting, the archbishop called for a prevention strategy revolving around "matrimonial fidelity" and "chastity and abstinence," while excluding "campaigns associated with models of behavior which destroy life and promote the spread of the evil in question"—a clear reference to the safe sex and condom education campaigns that the meeting delegates had affirmed as essential to halting AIDS.ⁱⁱⁱ More recently, both Pope Benedict XVI and Bishop Elio Sgreccia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, have called into question the effectiveness of condoms. In addition, many of the 4,000 plus bishops around the world lobby their own governments and some work at the United Nations to restrict access to condoms claiming that condoms cause AIDS, not prevent it.

In New York, while three universities we spoke to provide condoms to students, none of the branches of Catholic Charities and none of the hospitals to which we spoke said they provide prevention services that included condoms. One branch of Catholic Charities provides a referral to a service that did provide condoms. And, while the focus of Condoms4Life and Catholics for a Free Choice is on the Catholic hierarchy and institutions, we should point out that the lack of prevention services seems to be a problem at non-sectarian and public hospitals as well as at Catholic hospitals. With millions of dollars being awarded by state and federal government to assist in caring for AIDS patients, this local lack of care and global lack of emphasis on prevention is costing lives.

The State of HIV & AIDS in New York: Vital Statistics

According to the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation, New York State has the highest number of citizens living with AIDS in the country.^{iv} The chart below compares key facts about HIV/AIDS in New York to those same categories nationally. Statistics that refer to HIV are only of those persons who actually received an HIV test. As many as 250,000 people across the nation are living with the virus and are unaware of their status.^v

New York State in Comparison to the United States

	New York State	Nationwide
Cumulative number of people living with AIDS ^{vi}	70,133	415,193
New cases of AIDS reported in 2004 ^{vii}	7,641	44,737
Cumulative HIV infections ^{viii}	38,823	229,411
AIDS cases through December of 2004 ^{ix}	166,814	918,286

Reported Number of AIDS Cases^x (since 1981)

1.	New York	166,814
2.	California	135,221
3.	Florida	96,712
4.	Texas	64,479

New AIDS Cases in 2004^{xi}

1.	New York	7,641
2.	Florida	5,822
3.	California	4,679
4.	Texas	3,298

New York City^{xii}

Reported Cumulative Number of AIDS Cases (since 1981)	147,504
Persons living with AIDS at end of 2004	94,495
Deaths from AIDS in 2004	2,189
Total HIV Diagnoses in 2004	3,653

State of New York HIV/AIDS Major Funding Streams FY04

The State of New York receives significant funding from the federal government to help combat HIV/AIDS. The funding streams include the Ryan White Care Act, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Office of Minority Health (OMH).

Ryan White Care Act	\$349,194,588 ^{xiii}
CDC HIV/AIDS Funding	\$86,103,254 ^{xiv}
HOPWA Program Funding	\$66,715,154
SAMHSA HIV/AIDS Funding	\$10,187,463
OMH HIV/AIDS Funding	\$1,799,976
TOTAL FUNDS FY04 for HIV/AIDS	\$513,460,435

A key component of the Ryan White Act, which supplies well over 50 percent of all HIV/AIDS funding, is Title III, Early Intervention Services. Under this title, key prevention services eligible for funding under the act include “HIV testing, risk reduction counseling...transmission prevention.”^{xv} Only 7.1% of the nearly \$350 million went to Title III activities in FY 2004 in New York.^{xvi}

Catholic Dioceses and Charities in New York

Throughout the state, Catholic Charities, which is controlled by the individual dioceses, operates a network of social service agencies, some of which have dedicated programs for persons living with HIV and AIDS. Many of the programs claim to offer comprehensive HIV and AIDS counseling as well as other related programs, such as housing for people living with the disease. What follows is a breakdown by diocese of the programs offered by Catholic Charities for those living with HIV and AIDS. Note: in some of the dioceses, Catholic Charities is split up into several affiliate organizations.

HIV & AIDS Services Provided by Catholic Charities in New York^{xvii}

Catholic Charities (by diocese)	HIV/AIDS Services: Number of Programs & Services Offered	Referrals
Archdiocese of New York	2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster home for children with HIV/AIDS and general HIV/AIDS health services 	
Diocese of Albany	4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maternity services and general HIV/AIDS health services, including counseling and case management 	
Diocese of Syracuse	0	Offers a referral to AIDS Community Resources, which provides comprehensive services, including the distribution of condoms.
Diocese of Brooklyn	0	Vague referral given to “some churches in the area.”
Diocese of Buffalo	0	Offers a referral to AIDS Community Resources, which provides comprehensive services, including the distribution of condoms.
Diocese of Rochester Decentralized Offices	1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic Charities Community Services in Rochester provides extensive HIV/AIDS services for low income individuals 	Catholic Charities of Chemung-Schuyler stated that it does not have an HIV/AIDS program but provided a community referral.

Diocese of Ogdensburg	0: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abstinence Only Education Program 	
Diocese of Rockville Centre	1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive HIV/AIDS services including dental, health and housing care and support. 	

Catholic Health Care Institutions and HIV and AIDS Prevention

According to the Catholic Health Association of the United States, there are 28 Catholic health care institutions in the state of New York which are designated as hospitals in their directory.^{xviii} One of those listed, St. Vincent Catholic Medical Centers, is a corporation which operates several Catholic hospitals which are listed independently in the directory. Calvary Hospital (two locations) is a cancer specialty hospital and St. Vincent's Hospital-Westchester is a psychiatric specialty hospital. Therefore, the total number of Catholic hospitals we called is 24. We asked all of these hospitals if they provided care to people with HIV/AIDS, and if so, whether they offered preventative services including condoms—but none said they did so.

Number of Hospitals Called^{xix}	24
Do not provide services or referral/unsure about policy	5
Do not provides services but referred to local public health department	2
Only provide testing as part of patient evaluation	3
Transferred caller to a dead-end (non-working number or department that could not help)	4
Provide services	10
Unsure about condom policy	4
Provide condoms	0

Catholic Schools – Universities, Colleges and High Schools

The reach of the Catholic hierarchy extends also to the schools. In New York there are 28 Catholic universities and colleges and 122 Catholic high schools (both private and diocesan). Combined, more than 181,000 students attend a Catholic school beyond elementary school.^{xx}

In New York, the law requires that schools provide STD/HIV prevention education where abstinence is stressed and contraception is covered.^{xxi} However, Catholic schools have their own sexuality education guidelines and may not be following this law. When we called the curriculum office in the Archdiocese of New York we were told that there was grade appropriate sexuality education that promoted abstinence and educators were never in any way to promote contraception. If a question is raised by a student about condoms it would be addressed but “never ever promoted.”^{xxii}

The following information was obtained by speaking to representatives in the student health offices in New York’s 28 institutions of Catholic higher education:^{xxiii}

Number of Catholic universities and colleges^{xxiv}	28
Number of students enrolled ^{xxv}	115,372
Universities that provide condoms for students through student health services	3
Universities that do not provide condoms and do not provide referral	18
Universities that do not provide health services (2 year colleges, commuter schools)	7

Statements of the New York Catholic Hierarchy

The Archdiocese of New York is led by Edward Cardinal Egan. Cardinal Egan has a well documented history of opposing the distribution of condoms and urging that “chastity” be taught in public schools. Providing testimony to the City Council hearing about the distribution of condoms in public schools, Egan bitterly opposed the policy, “The new rule is promiscuity is acceptable, no matter what your age, as long as you use drugs and devices to avoid pregnancy and as long as you are willing to kill what is in the mother.”^{xxvi} According to an additional source Egan reportedly stated, “Try decency, try chastity, try Western civilization” before AIDS “puts an end to us all!”^{xxvii}

Catholic Statistics

In order to understand the influence of the Catholic hierarchy, ~~and by implication, the entire population~~ influenced by Catholic teachings against condoms, it is useful to consider some of the following statistics. Almost eight million people were assisted in all of the hospitals and health care centers in New York State.^{xxviii}

	Colleges and Universities	Number of Students	High Schools (Private, Parish and Diocesan)	Number of Students	Students under any Form of Catholic Instruction
Archdiocese of New York	11	55,386	52	29,757	279,653
Total for New York State	28	115,372	122	76,220	864,335

Resources

HIV/AIDS Information Outreach Project The New York Academy of Medicine

1216 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10029-5293
Phone: (212) 822-7323
Fax: (212) 423-0266
Email: hivinfo@mail.nyam.org

New York State Department of Health Toll-Free Helplines

- General Information
1-800-541-AIDS
- General Information, Spanish Language
1-800-233-7432
- AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP)
1-800-542-2437

New York State Department of Health Counseling & Testing

- Buffalo
1-800-962-5064
- Nassau
1-800-462-6785
- Rochester
1-800-962-5063
- Syracuse
1-800-562-9423
- Suffolk
1-800-462-6786
- Queens
1-800-462-6785
- NYS After Hours Hotline (Monday-Friday
4pm to 8pm and Saturday & Sunday 10am to
6pm)1-800-872-2777

ⁱ United Nations General Assembly, Special Session on HIV/AIDS, June 27, 2001, Intervention of Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, President of the Pontifical Council on Pastoral Health Care. (www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/documents/rc_seg-st_doc_20010627_un-aids_en.html, viewed February 3, 2006.)

ⁱⁱ Pontifical Council on Pastoral Health Care, XVII International Conference, "The Identity of Catholic Health Care Institutions," November 7, 2002.

ⁱⁱⁱ Archbishop Lozano, "Aspects of Response to the AIDS Pandemic," UN Special Session, August 2, 2001.

^{iv} Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, New York. (statehealthfacts.org, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^v US Department of Health and Human Services, "Ryan White Care Act Reauthorization Principles," July 27, 2005.

^{vi} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New York: Estimated Number of Persons Living with AIDS at the End of 2004." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Persons+Living+with+AIDS&topic=Persons+Living+with+AIDS+All+Ages&link_category=&link_subcategory=&link_topic=&welcome=0&area=New+York, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{vii} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New York: New AIDS Cases Reported in 2004." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=New+York&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=New+AIDS+Cases&topic=New+AIDS+Cases+All+Ages, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{viii} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New York: Cumulative HIV Infection Cases Reported through 2004 among States with Confidential Name-Based Reporting." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=New+York&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Cumulative+Reported+HIV+Infections+%28Cases%29&topic=Cumulative+Reported+HIV+Cases+All+Ages, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{ix} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New York: Reported Number of AIDS Cases, Cumulative through December 2004." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=New+York&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Cumulative+AIDS+Cases&topic=Cumulative+AIDS+Cases+All+Ages, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^x Kaiser State Health Facts, "Reported Number of AIDS Cases, Cumulative through December 2004." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=compare&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Cumulative+AIDS+Cases&topic=Cumulative+AIDS+Cases+All+Ages, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xi} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New AIDS Cases Reported in 2004." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=compare&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=New+AIDS+Cases&topic=New+AIDS+Cases+All+Ages, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xii} NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, "HIV/AIDS Surveillance Statistics 2004." (www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/ah/hivtables2004.shtml, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xiii} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New York: Total Ryan White CARE Act Funding." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=New+York&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Ryan+White+CARE+Act&topic=CARE+Act+Total+Funding, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xiv} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New York: HIV/AIDS Funding." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=New+York&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=HIV%2fAIDS+Funding, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xv} Judith A. Johnson and Paulette C. Morgan, "AIDS Ryan White Care Act," CRS Report for Congress, February 17, 2005.

^{xvi} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New York: Distribution of Ryan White CARE Act Funding By Title, FY2004." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=New+York&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Ryan+White+CARE+Act&topic=Funding+by+Title, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xvii} Information obtained from the respective websites and telephone calls to the individual Catholic Charities Offices on February 1, 2006.

^{xviii} Catholic Health Association, "Catholic Health Care Organizations in the United States." (www.chausa.org/Pub/TopNav/Directory/CatholicHealthcare.htm?organizationname=&city=&state=NY&zipcode=&zipcoderadius=, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xix} Telephone calls to individual institutions between January 24 and February 3, 2006.

^{xx} PJ Kenedy & Sons, "The Official Catholic Directory," 2005.

^{xxi} Alan Guttmacher Institute, "State Policies In Brief: Sex and STD/HIV Education," January 1, 2006.

^{xxii} Telephone call, February 3, 2006.

^{xxiii} Telephone calls made between January 30 and February 1, 2006.

^{xxiv} PJ Kenedy & Sons, "The Official Catholic Directory," 2005.

^{xxv} PJ Kenedy & Sons, "The Official Catholic Directory," 2005.

^{xxvi} Kevin McCoy, "A Man of Cloth & Controversy Appointee Known for Decisiveness," *Daily News* (New York) May 12, 2000.

^{xxvii} Andy Humm, "The Archbishop's Tale," *Village Voice*, June 6, 2000.

^{xxviii} PJ Kenedy & Sons, "The Official Catholic Directory," 2005.

Condoms4Life is an unprecedented worldwide public education effort to raise public awareness about the devastating effect of the bishops' ban on condoms. The campaign was launched on World AIDS Day 2001 with the display of billboards and ads in subways and newspapers saying, "Banning Condoms Kills." The campaign is sponsored by Catholics for a Free Choice, its partners in Europe and Latin America and colleagues in Africa and Asia.

Condoms4Life

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