

Condoms4Life Fact Sheet

February 2006

The Catholic Health Care System and HIV/AIDS Prevention in Washington, DC

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 Washington, DC, neither of the Catholic hospitals we contacted said they offer any HIV or AIDS services and none of the three universities offer condoms through their student health services. 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 DC: Vital Statistics

HIV and AIDS is one of the District's most severe health problems. While the precise number of District residents infected with HIV is unknown, District public health officials estimate that one out of every 20 District residents is HIV positive and nearly one out of every 50 District residents has AIDS. Thousands of these individuals do not know that they are infected and that they may infect others.^{iv} Washington, DC, ranks 11th in the nation in reported cases of AIDS since 1981, despite the fact it has the smallest population of any jurisdiction apart from Wyoming.

	District of Columbia	United States
Reported Number of AIDS Cases (since beginning of epidemic) ^v	16,259	918,286
New AIDS Cases in 2004 ^{vi}	992	44,737
Persons Living with AIDS ^{vii}	9,036	415,193

HIV/AIDS Major Funding Streams FY04 for the District of Columbia

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

Ryan White Care Act	\$53,623,991
CDC HIV/AIDS Funding	\$29,561,927
HOPWA Program Funding	\$11,802,000
SAMHSA HIV/AIDS Funding	\$2,357,541
TOTAL FUNDS FY04 for HIV/AIDS^{viii}	\$97,345,459

A key component of the Ryan White Act, which provides more than 50 percent of all 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 and transmission prevention.”^{ix} Only 6% of the nearly \$54 million went to Title III activities in FY 2004 in DC.^x

The Archdiocese of Washington and Catholic Charities

The Catholic church has a significant presence in Washington, DC. The Archdiocese of Washington covers the DC metro area and includes parts of Maryland. The following information relates only to the parts of the archdiocese in the District of Columbia.

The Archdiocese of Washington oversees the Catholic Community Services group, which includes the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, Anchor Mental Health, Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Institute and the Spanish Catholic Center (Centro Católico).

Through the archdiocese’s AIDS Ministry and Outreach, select HIV and AIDS services are provided. The archdiocese supports and promotes Food & Friends, a nondenominational service that provides meals and groceries for those living with HIV and AIDS. The Missionaries of Charity provide housing options for terminally ill AIDS patients through its convent in Northeast Washington.

Catholic Charities of Washington provides some services related to HIV and AIDS. Nebraska House services single men with disabilities, substance abuse problems, mental illness or HIV/AIDS.^{xi} Through the Archdiocesan Health Network, Catholic Charities of Washington provides 3,000 patient appointments annually with a value of some \$4 million in care.^{xii} According to their fiscal year 2004 990 tax return, Catholic Charities of Washington does not receive any grants from the government.

Catholic Health Care Institutions and HIV and AIDS Prevention

According to the archdiocese’s website, “the area’s Catholic hospitals, Georgetown University Hospital, Holy Cross Hospital and Providence Hospital provide routine HIV screening for at-risk persons.”^{xiii} No other HIV and AIDS services are mentioned. (It should be noted that Holy Cross Hospital is located in Wheaton, Maryland.)

In preparing this fact sheet, we called Catholic hospitals in the District and asked them a series of questions related to HIV and AIDS.^{xiv} We asked them if they provided any HIV and AIDS services, and if so, whether they provided preventive services and if condoms were included. Neither of the hospitals said they offered any HIV or AIDS services. One hospital referred us to the Infectious Disease department and the other made a referral to a physician.

	Catholic Hospitals	Number of Patients Assisted	Catholic Health Care Centers	Number of Patients Assisted
Washington, DC	2	359,000	1	109,400

Catholic Schools – Universities and High Schools

Young adults under the age of 25 are at high risk for HIV infection and AIDS. Among youth, teen girls and minorities have been particularly affected. In 2003, teen girls represented half of HIV cases reported among 13–19 year olds. Young African Americans represented 66% of AIDS cases reported among 13–19 year olds in 2003; Latino teens represented 21%.^{xv} Providing condoms for free or at a lowered cost is the least that can be done on college campuses throughout the country to protect young people from becoming infected. None of the three Catholic universities in the District said they provided condoms.^{xvi}

Post-Elementary Catholic Educational Institutions in Washington, DC^{xvii}

	Universities	Number of Students	High Schools (Private, Parish and Diocesan)	Number of Students
In Washington, DC	3	20,645	4	2,680

Number of Catholic universities	3
Number of students enrolled	20,645
Universities that provide condoms for students through student health services	0
Universities that do not provide condoms but provided caller other options (pharmacy, clinics off campus)	0
Universities that do not provide condoms and do not provide referral	3

The reach of the Catholic hierarchy extends also to the schools. In DC, there are four Catholic high schools (both private and diocesan). In DC, STD/HIV education is mandated under law.^{xviii} There is no requirement to cover or stress abstinence or contraception as part of the education. Opting out of the class is permitted,^{xix} and assuming that these Catholic high schools follow Catholic teachings, more than 2,500 young people are not being educated about the use of condoms or provided with them to prevent the spread of the disease.

Statements of the Catholic Hierarchy in Washington, DC

In 2003, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick issued a pastoral letter entitled, “Fullness of Life.” In it he claimed, “While many policies aim to prevent HIV/AIDS by advocating “safe sex” or “safer sex” through condom use and/or condom distribution, the Catholic Church recognizes these are not solutions, but myths. Condoms too often fail in preventing the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, or the incurable Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) that increases one’s susceptibility to HIV infection, while giving their users a false sense of security.”^{xx}

In 2005, the Archdiocese of Washington opposed a school sex education program that taught students how to use condoms as “clearly not reflective of our values.”^{xxi} And in 2002, the archdiocese released a fact sheet about condoms containing several assertions about condoms that are simply not true. For example, the fact sheet claimed that the Catholic church does not “ban condoms” and that condoms are not a means of preventing HIV/AIDS. In fact, the US bishops' own rules make their ban on condoms clear. The *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services*, written by the bishops, and which govern all the Catholic hospitals in the US, clearly state: “Catholic health institutions may not promote or condone contraceptive practices.” (Directive 52) On the second point, the US Centers for Disease Control & Prevention says that studies have demonstrated that latex condoms provide “an essentially impermeable barrier to particles the size of STD pathogens,” and are “highly effective in preventing transmission of HIV.”^{xxii}

Resources

The Women’s Collective

1436 U Street, NW, Suite 200
 Washington, DC 20009
 Phone: (202) 483-7003
 Email: info@womenscollective.org
 Website: www.womenscollective.org

Whitman-Walker Clinic

1407 S Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20009
 Phone: (202) 797-3500
 Website: www.wwc.org

La Clínica del Pueblo

2831 15th Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20009
 Phone: (202) 462-4788
 Website: www.lcdp.org

ⁱ United Nations General Assembly, Special Session on HIV/AIDS, Intervention of Archbishop Javier Lozano Barragan, President of the Pontifical Council on Pastoral Health Care, June 27, 2001. (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} DC Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, "HIV and AIDS in the Nation's Capitol: Improving the District of Columbia's Response to a Public Health Crisis," August 2005. (www.dcappleseed.org/projects/publications/HIV.pdf, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^v Kaiser State Health Facts, "Reported Number of AIDS Cases, Cumulative through December 2004: DC." (www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=District+of+Columbia&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Cumulative+AIDS+Cases, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{vi} Kaiser State Health Facts, "New AIDS Cases in 2004: DC."

(www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=District+of+Columbia&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=New+AIDS+Cases, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{vii} Kaiser State Health Facts, "Persons living with AIDS in 2004: DC."

(www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=District+of+Columbia&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=Persons+Living+with+AIDS, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{viii} Kaiser State Health Facts, "District of Columbia: HIV/AIDS Funding."

(www.statehealthfacts.org/cgi-bin/healthfacts.cgi?action=profile&area=District+of+Columbia&category=HIV%2fAIDS&subcategory=HIV%2fAIDS+Funding, viewed February 3, 2006.)

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

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

^{xi} Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, "Nebraska House." (www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/center/dc_centers/nebraska.html, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xii} Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, "Archdiocesan Health Network." (www.catholiccharitiesdc.org/center/spec_services/arch_health.html, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xiii} Archdiocese of Washington, "AIDS Ministry and Outreach in the Archdiocese of Washington." (www.adw.org/service/hiv_aids.asp, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xiv} Telephone calls made on January 24, 2006.

^{xv} Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "HIV and AIDS Policy Fact Sheet: The HIV and AIDS Crisis in the United States." (www.kff.org/hivaids/loader.cfm?url=/commonspot/security/getfile.cfm&PageID=32947, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xvi} Telephone calls made on January 24, 2006.

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

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

^{xix} Alan Guttmacher Institute, "State Policies in Brief: Sex and STD/HIV Education", January 2006 (www.agi-usa.org/statecenter/spibs/spib_SE.pdf, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xx} Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, "Pastoral Letter: The Fullness of Life," 2003. (www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/prolife/Articles/PastoralLetter.pdf, viewed February 3, 2006.)

^{xxi} Jon Ward, "Schools chosen for sex course in Montgomery," *Washington Times*, March 5, 2005.

^{xxii} Centers for Disease Control, "Fact Sheet for Public Health Personnel: Male Latex Condoms and Sexually Transmitted Diseases," January 23, 2003. (www.cdc.gov/hiv/pubs/facts/condoms.htm, viewed February 3, 2006.)

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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