

The Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada

Canada's Drug Strategy is the federal response to the harmful use of substances. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, inhalants and solvents. The Strategy takes a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for, and the supply of, drugs and substances. It contributes to a healthier, safer Canada through prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction initiatives.

Injection Drug Use

Problematic substance use impacts public health in Canada. Of particular concern is the spread of infectious disease such as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C through injection drug use. Studies have shown that 30% of new cases of HIV infection and the majority of newly acquired Hepatitis C in Canada can be attributed directly to injection drug use. Furthermore, this risk factor is of even more importance among Aboriginal populations (where injection drug use accounts for 63% of new HIV infections) and among women (where it accounts for 47% of new infections).

A New Partnership for Reducing Harm

The Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada was launched to bring about strengthened action on HIV/AIDS, both at home and abroad. This initiative contributes to a comprehensive and integrated Government of Canada response – one that acknowledges that addressing the epidemic and its root causes is the only way to bring it to an end. The Federal Initiative builds on the lessons learned from the former Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS, the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health, and extensive consultations with a range of stakeholders, including provincial and territorial governments. It calls for strengthened partnerships and engagement to promote coherent action and the development of population specific approaches to remove barriers to services for those people living with,

or vulnerable to, HIV including those dealing with other associated health issues like problematic substance use.

The Federal Initiative, announced by the Government of Canada in May 2004, increases on-going federal HIV/AIDS funding from \$42.2 million to \$84.4 million annually by 2008-2009. The goals of the Federal Initiative are to:

- Prevent the acquisition and transmission of new infections;
- Slow the progression of the disease and improve quality of life;
- Reduce the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS; and
- Contribute to the global effort to reduce the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of the disease.

The Federal Initiative is founded on three key policy directions:

- Partnership and Engagement which promote coherent action – locally, nationally and globally – by people, organizations, governments and systems involved in the HIV/AIDS response, while respecting jurisdictional mandates.
- Integration which recognizes that many people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS have complex health needs and may be vulnerable to other infectious diseases, such as those transmitted sexually or by injection drug use. The Initiative will link federal HIV/AIDS programs with other health and social programs, as appropriate. This will ensure an integrated approach to removing barriers to services for people living with or vulnerable to, multiple infections and other conditions affecting health. Those affected will play a key role in identifying these barriers and finding solutions.
- Accountability among its delivery partners including making achievements and challenges public through the World AIDS Day report, published each year on December 1.

Government of Canada departments and agencies, including Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian



Institutes of Health Research and Correctional Service Canada and others will work together along with provincial and territorial governments, non governmental organizations, researchers, health care professionals and people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Work will focus on five areas of federal action: program and policy interventions; knowledge development; communications and social marketing; coordination, planning, evaluation and reporting; and global engagement.

The Federal Initiative and Canada's Drug Strategy

The Government of Canada is marshalling many resources to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS and Canada's Drug Strategy are two examples. Other measures include those to help reduce poverty and homelessness, which may make individuals more vulnerable to problematic substance use and HIV/AIDS.

All these initiatives reinforce collaborative partnerships between all sectors of Canadian society to address the root causes of HIV/AIDS. These partnerships help to enhance activities in areas such as research, communications, program interventions and others. They also help to increase the effectiveness of all partners in developing and implementing comprehensive, strategic action plans to provide Canadians with a society increasingly free of the harms associated with problematic substance use, including the spread of HIV/AIDS.

More information on the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada is available at http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/hiv_aids/federal_initiative/initiative/index.html

To learn more about Canada's Drug Strategy, please visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds

Find out what governments, non-governmental organizations, and other partners are doing – National Framework for Action – Visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa