

**Promoting Involvement of
Faith Communities in HIV/STD/HCV
Prevention in New York State,
1983-Present**

(Updated as of March 2013)



Division of HIV/STD/HCV Prevention
AIDS Institute
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Table of Contents

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
HIV/AIDS in New York State	1
The Role of the AIDS Institute	1
Recognition of the Important Role of Faith Communities in HIV Prevention in NYS	1
Why Faith Communities?	2
AIDS Institute Program and Services	2
• <i>Funding of Faith-Based HIV Prevention Programs</i>	2
• <i>Technical Assistance for Faith Communities and CBOs</i>	2
• <i>Learning More About Involvement of Faith Communities in HIV Prevention:</i>	3
• <i>Forums</i>	4
• <i>Fact Sheet</i>	4
• <i>Faith Communities Project</i>	4
• <i>Regional Needs Assessment and Planning Activities</i>	5
• <i>Active Support and Involvement in Regional Activities</i>	5
• <i>Regional Action Plan Activities</i>	6
• <i>Ongoing Support of Regional Activities</i>	7
• <i>Regional HIV Prevention and Health Care Activities</i>	8
• <i>Intergovernmental Collaborations</i>	9
• <i>Communication and Networking</i>	10
• <i>Technical Assistance Workshop Series for Faith Communities</i>	10
• <i>Workshops, Presentations and Articles</i>	11
• <i>Evaluation of Faith Communities Project</i>	12
• <i>Academic Partnerships/Collaborations</i>	13
• <i>Clergy Advisory Group</i>	14
• <i>Resources for Faith Communities</i>	14
For more information	14
References	15
Suggested Strategies for Working With Faith Communities	18

HIV/AIDS in New York State: New York State (NYS) leads the nation in both cumulative and annual AIDS cases, and in the incidence of AIDS. As the hope for a cure remains unfulfilled, prevention is the only tool for reducing the threat of HIV transmission and AIDS. As of June 2000, reported AIDS cases in NYS totaled roughly 140,000 of which nearly three-quarters were among African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans.¹ The challenge continues to meet the HIV prevention needs of diverse communities.

The Role of the AIDS Institute: For over 30 years, the AIDS Institute has been a national leader in advancing comprehensive HIV prevention, care, support services and programs to address HIV-related stigma and discrimination. Within the AIDS Institute, the Division of HIV/STD/HCV prevention provides a comprehensive HIV prevention program with interventions and strategies to prevent both transmission and acquisition of HIV. Services include outreach; health education and risk reduction; individual- and group-level HIV prevention counseling; HIV counseling, testing, referral, and partner notification assistance; public information; training and technical assistance; capacity building, and supportive services. Among a network of more than 200 community-based organizations, the AIDS Institute supports faith-based agencies serving communities of color to play active roles in HIV prevention.

Recognition of the Important Role of Faith Communities in HIV Prevention in NYS: Early in the epidemic, NYS recognized the importance of involvement of diverse sectors of communities in fighting HIV/AIDS. By 1989, when the Department of Health published the results of an extensive consultation and planning process to develop a 5-year strategic plan in a far-reaching document, *AIDS New York's Response: A 5-Year Interagency Plan*, the importance of involving all sectors of the community, including faith communities, in HIV prevention was clear.²

Subsequent studies commissioned by the AIDS Institute to further identify how best to meet HIV prevention needs of New York's communities.

The results of these projects, published in documents such as *Cultural Factors Among Hispanics: Perception and Prevention of HIV Infection*, *Hispanics and HIV: Strategies and Tactics for Education/Prevention*, *AIDS & African-Americans: It's Time for Action!* and *A Native American leadership Response to HIV and AIDS* underscored the need to engage and involve community leadership, including leadership of faith communities, despite the challenges of doing so.³⁻⁶

Why are religious institutions an ideal setting?

- Most people claim a religious affiliation.
- Religious organizations serve all classes, races, and age groups.
- Clergy are respected as a credible source of advice and guidance.
- Religious organizations have a history of helping communities.
- Health information can be communicated to hard-to-reach populations.
- Religious organizations are a socializing force in America, particularly for communities of color.

Beginning with the very first Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan for NYS completed in collaboration with the NYS HIV Prevention Planning Group (PPG) in 1995, and in every *Plan* or *Plan Update* thereafter, the need for faith community involvement is reflected.⁷⁻¹⁴ The PPG remains a principal collaborator for the Division of HIV Prevention; together the PPG and the Division have further developed the Faith Project.

Recognition of the importance of faith community involvement in HIV prevention efforts was carried forward by the NYS AIDS Advisory Council. It is reflected in the Council's report *Communities at Risk: HIV/AIDS in Communities of Color* released in 2001.¹⁵

All of the above-mentioned publications were broadly distributed throughout NYS and beyond.

Why Faith Communities? Because prevention programs must be broad-based, religious institutions are an ideal setting for prevention efforts. Most mainline denominations have established AIDS ministries to address the crisis. Networks have been dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention and a variety of resources have been developed.

Realizing the ongoing challenge of reaching people of color, the African-American church is a catalyst for gains in educational opportunities, voter registration, and economic advances. Therefore, minority religious organizations can and do play powerful roles in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

AIDS Institute Program and Services Funding of Faith-Based HIV Prevention Programs:

Since the early 1990s the AIDS Institute has contracted with faith-based agencies to meet the HIV prevention needs of individuals, families and communities reflecting various racial/ethnic groups, cultures, languages, etc. These agencies and organizations fulfill a variety of roles in support of HIV prevention. By 2001 there were 13 faith-based organizations receiving grant funding through the AIDS Institute and, in addition, five organizations provided case management services for persons with HIV/AIDS and their families with financial support through the NYS Medicaid Program. In addition, the AIDS Institute's Anonymous Counseling and Testing Program collaborates with faith-based organizations at the local level to make HIV testing available.

Faith-Based Agencies...

- Develop community leadership.
- Improve social and living conditions.
- Establish cultural and recreational services.
- Provide peer education, outreach, and prevention.
- Assure community awareness.
- Serve as a source of HIV prevention information
- Refer individuals to HIV testing and prevention services
- Fulfill leadership roles in communities they serve
- Establish HIV/AIDS "care teams"

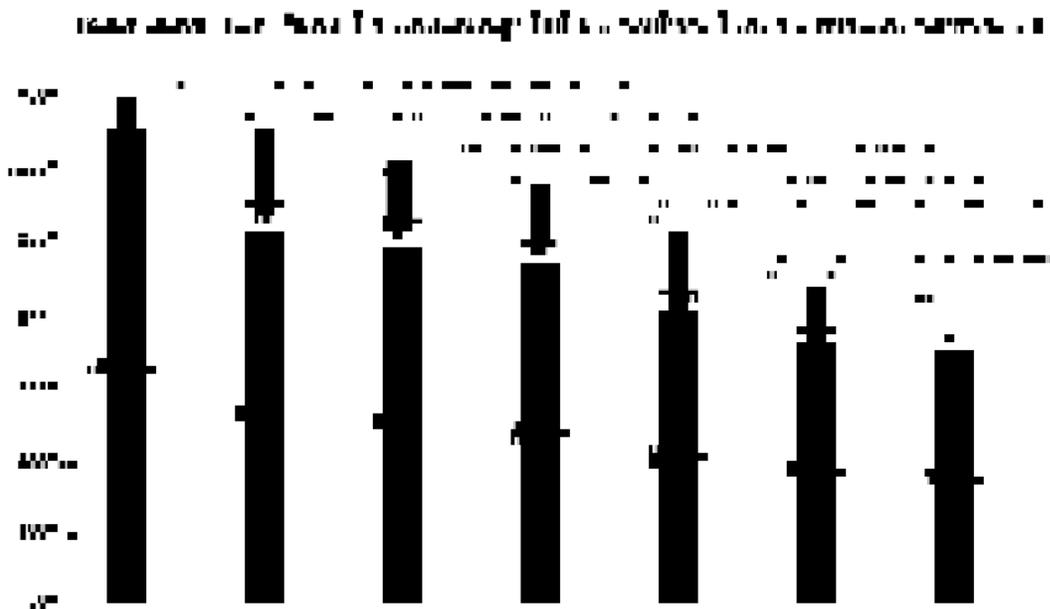
Technical Assistance for Faith Communities and CBOs: *A Guide to HIV/AIDS Education in Religious Settings* was developed by the AIDS Institute in collaboration with religious communities throughout New York State and published in 1998.¹⁶ It was a direct outcome of recommended strategies contained in *AIDS & African-Americans: It's Time for Action* (1993).⁵

The *Guide* provided educational materials and guidelines for religious leaders to counsel their congregants on issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. It was mailed directly to over 12,000 registered faith communities.

Learning More About Involvement of Faith Communities in HIV Prevention:

In October 1997, the AIDS Institute mailed a survey to over 12,000 religious organizations in NYS. To supplement an initial poor response, follow-up telephone calls were made to obtain a sample of 3,197 respondents (25% of all religious organizations in NYS). Only 17% of respondents reported that they provided or facilitated HIV-related prevention services to their community. Referrals for services were made by 49% of organizations and 35% offered no services or referrals.

Close to 50% of organizations located in New York City said that they did not provide, facilitate or offer referrals for HIV prevention-related services, even though New York City has the highest rate AIDS cases in New York State.



The most common services offered by the 525 faith communities that provide HIV prevention-related services were distribution of HIV/AIDS literature (51%), on-site HIV/AIDS education (48%), and HIV/AIDS support groups (24%). Less common services included HIV testing referral (13%), information about hypodermic needles and syringes (7%), and distribution of condoms (3%).

There was a low perceived need of services among Jewish organizations and organizations with congregants who are white (56%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (55%). In addition, 41% of religious providers in areas identified as "high need areas" by the AIDS Institute's Community

Needs Index perceived a low need for HIV-related services among their community members.

Faith communities said that they were willing to explore the possibility of offering or enhancing HIV/AIDS-related service

The most encouraging finding of the survey was that 50% of the respondents expressed a willingness to meet with community-based HIV/AIDS service providers. This included 60% of organizations with primarily Hispanic congregants and 74% with primarily African American congregants.¹⁷

Forums: Based on the stated willingness of faith communities to explore the possibility of becoming more involved in HIV prevention, the AIDS Institute and PPG collaborated on community forums to convene religious leaders and HIV/AIDS service providers in order to gather views and perspectives on barriers, strategies, and best practices to create community linkages. Three forums were held in 1999-2000 to identify existing successful approaches to working together as well as barriers which inhibit such collaboration and to learn about the technical assistance needs of faith communities and HIV/AIDS service providers. These forums were successful, yielding a wealth of information regarding models of collaboration. Lines of communication were established, relationships fostered and subsequent activities ensued.

Fact Sheet: As a result of the forums, the AIDS Institute developed a fact sheet of suggested strategies and "tips" (enclosed) for use by faith communities and community-based organizations seeking to work with each other. This fact sheet was distributed, together with a letter which conveyed the results of a statewide survey of religious organizations, to all AIDS Institute-funded HIV prevention providers in December 2000. The mailing also indicated the availability of contact and composition information for faith organizations.

Faith Communities Project: At the January 2001 meeting of the NYS HIV PPG, a proposal for a Faith Communities Project - - jointly developed by the AIDS Institute's Division of HIV Prevention and the PPG's Racial/Ethnic Committee - - was adopted as a priority project for support from by new Supplemental Funds received from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The AIDS Institute's application to CDC for Supplemental Funds included, as a component, the Faith Communities Project. The AIDS Institute's proposal for Supplemental Funds was approved.

In anticipation of receipt of Supplemental Funds, the Division of HIV Prevention initiated recruitment for a full-time staff person to:

- ✓ coordinate all relevant efforts around faith community issues;
- ✓ encourage and assist local/regional clergy/CBO collaborations, including follow-up with potential and existing collaborations resulting from previous activities in the Capital District;
- ✓ update existing materials, such as the *Guide*, and develop new materials;

- ✓ prepare reports;
- ✓ recommend approaches for integrating faith community issues within the Regional Gaps Analysis;
- ✓ network with other state agencies having faith-based initiatives to determine options for collaboration;
- ✓ explore similar efforts underway in other states and identify models that could be adopted/adapted for use here;
- ✓ mobilize technical assistance; and
- ✓ keep the PPG informed of State-supported work in this area.

A staff person for the Faith Communities Project, Carol Tyrell, was appointed in September, 2001.

A major, two-day Statewide conference, "Meeting on Common Ground: The Role of Faith Based Communities in HIV/AIDS," was held at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City in November 2001. The conference, attended by 175 individuals, was targeted toward representatives of faith communities serving racial/ethnic minorities, professionals and volunteers providing HIV prevention services in communities of faith, people living with HIV/AIDS, and representatives from non-AIDS specific community-based organizations. Conference evaluations, completed by participants, indicated that the conference was very well-received. Short- and long-term action plans, including regional meetings, are being developed as an outcome of this conference.

Regional Needs Assessment and Planning Activities: Participants of the November 2001 conference, "Meeting on a Common Ground: The Role of Faith Based Communities in HIV/AIDS", identified specific regional needs. Committees were developed in each region to address issues and initiate planning to meet identified needs. Over 400 individuals participated in 31 local planning meetings. Regional committees developed action plans that highlighted local needs and specified specific tasks to be completed.

During 2002 - 2003 regional committees designed and implemented activities that directly related to meeting identified needs as described in the action plans. Activities implemented included: HIV awareness events, educational presentations to faith leaders and community representatives, and local meetings to network and continue to support partnerships.

By 2003 a statewide network including active local committees was in place. The AIDS Institute continues to foster regional partnerships, support information sharing, and identify resources to further HIV prevention and care efforts in NYS.

Active Support and Involvement in Regional Activities: During 2003-2004 the AIDS Institute supported regional action plan activities throughout the state. Activities included conferences, Chat and Chew monthly sessions, Prayer Breakfasts/Health Fairs, HIV-related topical forums, HIV training, a Spiritual Retreat, technical assistance workshops and quarterly meetings.

National HIV Testing Day, held in June each year, provides an opportunity for the AIDS Institute and local faith communities to work together. HIV testing is offered in various venues statewide each year.

The AIDS Institute also participated in the statewide "Breakthrough Sunday" initiative, in partnership with GROUP Ministries of Buffalo, to increase HIV testing in faith communities. "Breakthrough Sunday" events were held in various locations across the state, including Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany on August 10, 2003. Over 500 individuals were tested.

Specific technical assistance workshops held in conjunction with on-going regional activities during 2003 included:

- Affirming A Future With Hope: HIV & Substance Abuse Prevention Curriculum for African American Communities of Faith
- Developing Your Nonprofit Faith-Based Program: The Key to Success
- Strategies for Working with Faith Communities on HIV/AIDS Prevention

Regional Action Plan Activities: During 2004-2005, the AIDS Institute continued to support regional action plan activities to increase awareness and foster collaborative relationships between faith communities and community based organizations.

Activities included, but were not limited to, the following: Balm in Gilead Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS; community forums; quarterly "Open Dialogue" dinner series with faith communities and consumers; health fairs; conferences; World AIDS Day community observances; and capacity-building workshops to strengthen the capacity of faith-based ministries to address HIV prevention and care issues.

Specific technical assistance workshops included:

- "Developing Your Faith-Based Ministries"
- "Are You Ready" process for applying for state and federal funds
- "Organizational Development" strategic planning and funding development plans
- "Resources Available to Faith Communities"

**Regional Activities During
2004-2005 Have Included...**

Bronx

- Community collaborative candlelight service to commemorate Black Church Week of Prayer for Healing of AIDS

Long Island

- Quarterly "Open Dialogue" dinner series with clergy and consumers

Brooklyn

- Community Forum: "HIV & Women: Women Clergy Response to HIV/AIDS"

Buffalo

- Open Dialogue: "Keeping it Real!"

Hudson Valley

- Technical Assistance Workshop: "Are You Ready" for emerging organizations interested in applying for federal funding

Queens

- Interdenominational community worship and prayer service: Healing of HIV/AIDS
- Two community awareness programs for African American HIV Awareness Day

Southern Tier

- Clergy Forum: Role of Faith Communities in HIV/AIDS

On-going Support of Regional Activities: During 2005-2006, the AIDS Institute continued to support regional activities to strengthen collaborative relationships between faith communities and HIV service providers. In addition, the AIDS Institute collaborated with the Office of Community and Minority Affairs at Columbia University to foster great understanding of the social factors that impact communities of color and contributes to the disproportionately rates of HIV/AIDS on communities of color, and to dialogue with faith leaders on how to address these issues in their congregations.

Activities included, but were not limited, to the following: Clergy Roundtable discussions, interfaith dialogues and community forums on topics ranging from: HIV and Older Adults; A Closer Walk: A film about AIDS in the World; Faith Communities Response to HIV and AIDS; HIV & Spirituality: Addressing the Spiritual Needs of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS; Youth and HIV/AIDS; Black Church Week of Prayer events; National HIV/AIDS Observances; Healing Retreats; Faith-based nursing; developing Congregational CARE Teams; and the making of a Memorial Quilt.

Specific technical assistance workshops included:

- "Communication for Social Change: Community Dialogue and Collective Action to Increase Access and Utilizations of HIV Prevention Service for African Americans".
- "Resources for Faith Communities"
- "Engaging and Partnering with Faith Leaders for Access and Use of HIV Prevention Services: Training for Health Departments and Community-Based Organizations"
- "Mobilizing Communities of Faith for HIV Prevention: A Training for Ministers and Faith Leaders"
- "Capacity-Building Workshop Series for leaders of faith communities who would like to develop or strengthen their existing organizations: Developing Faith-Based Ministries; Developing Your Strategic Plan; Developing Your Program Budget; Developing Your Fund Development Plan"
- "Applying for Federal Funding"
- "Keeping it Real! Faith-Based Facilitator Training for Adults working with Young People"

**Regional Activities During
2005-2006 Have Included...**

Bronx

- Age is No Barrier: HIV and Older Adults

Brooklyn

- My Brothers' Keeper! Men of Faith Response to HIV and AIDS

Long Island

- A Closer Walk: A film and interfaith clergy panel discussion on AIDS in the World

Manhattan

- Retreat: Receive, Release and Relax

Northeastern

- Clergy Roundtable Series: Developing Congregational CARE Teams

Queens

- Women Like You — Women and HIV/AIDS

Rochester

- Family to Family: A faith based model to strengthen family functioning

Western

- Spirituality & Health: Addressing the Spiritual needs of Persons Living with HIV/AIDS

Regional HIV Prevention and Health Care Activities: During 2006-2007, the AIDS Institute continued to support activities to enhance the capacity of faith communities and HIV service providers to collaborate and to collectively respond to HIV prevention and health care efforts.

Activities included, but were not limited to, the following: Stigma and HIV/AIDS: Getting Beyond the Fear to A Compassionate Response; Keeping the Faith Community Response on HIV/AIDS; HIV & Spirituality: Responding to the Total Person; Intergenerational communication; Men of Faith Response to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic; Clergy Roundtable: When My Theology Conflicts with My Reality; Sometimes I Cry: Sheryl Lee Ralph HIV/AIDS Production; HIV & Spirituality Retreat; Celebrate Recovery: A 12 Step Program; Faith Practitioners Response to HIV/AIDS in Prison Ministries; Young People's Response to HIV/AIDS; Integrating HIV into Faith Based-Ministries; Domestic Violence & HIV: Faith Communities Response; Women Like You! Women and HIV/AIDS: What Faith Communities Need to Know; and Families and Re-Entry: How Faith Communities Can Assist.

Regional Activities During 2006-2007 Have Included...

Bronx

- Domestic Violence and HIV/AIDS: Faith Communities Response

Central

- HIV and Spirituality: Revealing the Mystery for the Health of It

Hudson Valley

- Family to Family: A faith-based model to strengthen family functioning

Long Island

- Interfaith Clergy Dialogue: When My Theology Conflicts with My Reality

Manhattan

- Community Dialogue Series explored how various faith traditions (i.e., Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism) address HIV/AIDS

Queens

- Clergy Dialogue: Faith Communities Response to HIV and AIDS

Southern Tier

- Capacity-building workshop for faith-based and community-based organizations

Western

- Integrating HIV into Faith-Based Ministries

Specific technical assistance workshops included:

- "Board Development"
- "Developing Your 501(c)3"
- "Compassionate Capital Fund Targeted Capacity Building Program"
- "Family to Family: Implementing a faith-based program to strengthen family functioning and reduce harm to self and others"

Intergovernmental Collaborations: During 2003 through 2012, the AIDS Institute developed and continued to maintain relationships with federal, state and city agencies with similar efforts to reach faith communities:

- *City and state partnerships.* The AIDS Institute sponsored four faith forums with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene between 2003 and 2007.
- *Federal and state partnerships.* The AIDS Institute collaborated with liaisons from federally designated "Faith Centers" (HUD, USDA, DOL, DHHS) to disseminate information, share resources, increase awareness about funding opportunities and enhance the capacity of faith communities to apply for federal funds. In addition, in 2005, the AIDS Institute collaborated with the Office of Minority Health Research Center to plan a conference to address HIV/AIDS in the African community of New York City; and again in 2008, to co-sponsor the second statewide faith forum: Responding to the Call: Faith Communities' Response to HIV/AIDS in Poughkeepsie, NY, to highlight faith based HIV prevention activities, and to address the issues that continue to challenge HIV prevention efforts in faith communities: stigma, discrimination and the spirit of sexuality.
- *State agency partnerships.* The AIDS Institute worked closely with the NYS Department of Family Assistance Office of Children and Family Services and Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance as well as the NYS Office of the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the NYS Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) to promote programs and services available to faith communities.

Regional Activities During 2007-2008 Have Included...

Bronx

- Veterans & HIV/AIDS: How Faith Communities Can Respond to the Need of Veterans Impacted By HIV/AIDS

Brooklyn

- Faith Communities Response to the needs of the LGBT community during the HIV/AIDS pandemic

Central

- A Closer Walk! A film and panel discussion about AIDS in the world

Hudson Valley

- Responding to the Call: Faith Communities Response to HIV/AIDS- A Statewide Faith Forum

Long Island

- Women of Faith: Responding to HIV/AIDS

Manhattan

- A Closer Walk! A Film about AIDS in the World

Northeastern

- Clergy Roundtable: Why Should Clergy Talk About HIV/AIDS

Queens

- Stigma & Discrimination: How the Faith Community Can Support Persons Living with HIV/AIDS

Southern Tier

- Capacity Building Grant Workshop for Faith Based and Community Based Organizations

Rochester

- A Closer Walk! A film and Panel Discussion on AIDS in the world

Western

- Dismantling the Taboo: Faith Communities Response to the HIV Epidemic in the Latino Community

The AIDS Institute participated in the newly created Interagency Faith-Based Liaison meetings. The meetings are coordinated by the Office of Children and Family Services and are designed to discuss activities currently underway in NYS government agencies to reach faith communities and discuss opportunities to collaborate. Participating agencies include the Office of Children and Family Services, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Department of Education, Office of Prevention of Domestic Violence and other agencies.

Intergovernmental collaborations such as these expand faith communities' access to information, resources and technical assistance.

Communication and Networking: AIDS Institute staff developed numerous mechanisms to maintain ongoing communication and foster information sharing between and across regions.

- *Conference calls* are used to plan regional activities, to discuss program evaluations and to provide updates on regional and statewide events.
- *E-mail* is used to communicate meeting minutes, training opportunities, resources available, and regional/statewide events.
- An electronic *List serv* was created to enhance regional and statewide information sharing and networking between community-based organizations, faith communities and the AIDS Institute.

Technical Assistance Workshop Series for Faith Communities:

The AIDS Institute received a grant from the New York City HIV Ryan White Title I Planning Council to develop and implement a series of skills-building workshops for faith communities in New York City. Workshop topics included: Developing Successful Nonprofit Faith-Based Program; Developing Your Community Development Corporation; Grant Writing; Resources Available to Faith Communities and a session on HIV & Spirituality. In addition, the grant also supported the PWA Faith-Based Summit II, held in February 2004, a gathering for faith leaders and consumers. During 2004, several technical assistance workshops were provided to strengthen the infrastructure and activities of faith-

Regional Activities During 2008-2009 Have Included...

Bronx

- Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS: What Congregations Need to Know

Brooklyn

- "My Brother's Keeper" Responding to the Needs of Men Living with HIV/AIDS in Faith communities

Long Island

- Healing the Invisible Wounds: Addressing Stigma of HIV/AIDS in faith Communities

Manhattan

- Many views, One Vision: Responding to the Needs of LGBT Youth in Faith Communities
- Asian & Pacific Island's Faith Communities Response to HIV/AIDS: Meditation and HIV: The Buddhist Response

Northeastern

- Black Women & HIV/AIDS: Why Should the Faith Community Be Concerned

Queens

- Families Impacted by HIV/AIDS: How Can Faith communities Support
- Developing Your 501 (c)(3): A Workshop for Faith-based and Community-based Organizations

Western

- Breaking the Silence! Know the Facts about HIV/AIDS and Living with Cancer
- How Faith Communities Can Support Men Impacted by HIV/AIDS

based ministries.

In 2005-2006, the AIDS Institute worked with MICTAN, the faith-based organization funded by the CDC, to provide technical assistance workshops to faith-based and community-based organizations in upstate New York. Technical assistance workshops included: "Engaging and Partnering with Faith Leaders for Access and Use of HIV Prevention Services: Training for Health Departments and Community-Based Organizations" and "Mobilizing Communities of Faith for HIV Prevention: A Training for Ministers and Faith Leaders".

In addition, the AIDS Institute collaborated with the Community Research Group of Columbia University School of Public Health to provide technical assistance to faith communities in Upper Manhattan to implement "Family to Family: A faith-based structured intervention to strengthen family functioning and reducing risk". The program was presented to faith communities in various regions of the state.

Workshops, Presentations and Articles:

The PPG and Division of HIV Prevention have collaborated on workshops, presentations and articles on the importance of involving faith communities in HIV prevention to local, statewide and national audiences. Information has been presented by the AIDS Institute and PPG at several conferences, including: American Public Health Association (APHA), Washington, D.C., 11/98¹⁸; Community Planning Leadership Summit for HIV Prevention, Pittsburgh, PA, 2/99¹⁹; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HIV Prevention Conference, Atlanta, GA 8/99²⁰; APHA, Chicago, IL, 11/99²¹; the Balm of Gilead Conference, Myrtle Beach, SC; and at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HIV Prevention Conference, Atlanta, GA 7/03.²² In addition, New York's efforts were featured in the *NASTAD Bulletin*.²³ In April, 2004, "Engaging Faith Communities in HIV Prevention in New York State..." was presented to an international audience at the 18th World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education held in Melbourne Australia.²⁴ In June 2007, "Advancing HIV Prevention and Health Care Efforts in Faith Communities in New York State" was presented to an international audience at the 19th

Regional Activities During 2009-2010 Have Included...

Bronx

- What Faith Communities Need to Know about Domestic Violence & HIV/AIDS

Brooklyn

- Age is No Barrier: What Congregations Need to Know about HIV and Older Adults

Central

- A Closer Walk! A film and clergy panel discussion about AIDS in the World

Long Island

- Addressing the HIV Prevention Needs of Young People in Faith Communities

Manhattan

- Faith Communities' Response to Domestic Violence and HIV/AIDS

Northeastern

- Care for the Caregiver: How Faith Communities Can Support Persons Impacted by HIV/AIDS

Queens

- How the Muslim Community Can Support Persons Impacted by HIV/AIDS and Other Related Diseases?

Western

- Healing in Volumes – A New Approach to Strengthen Spiritual Health and Wellness in Your Faith Community

World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education held in Vancouver, Canada.²⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HIV Prevention Conference, Atlanta, GA 12/07.²⁶ in 2010, "Working Together: Fostering Collaborative Relationships Between Faith Communities and HIV/AIDS Service Providers," was presented at the 20th World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education held in Geneva, Switzerland.²⁷

In 2012, "Best Practices for African and African American Communities to Access HIV Treatment: NYSDOH Faith-Based Model" was presented at Faith & AIDS 2012: Taking Action for Health, Dignity and justice at the Interfaith Pre-Conference on HIV/AIDS in Washington, DC. In addition, the video, Voices of Faith: Faith Communities' Response to HIV/AIDS was shown in the Global Village at the 19th International AIDS Conference in Washington, DC.

Evaluation of Faith Communities Project: In 2005, the AIDS Institute convened a workgroup to conduct a sample-based follow-up to the 1997 statewide survey. The purpose of the survey was to assess how many organizations that responded to the 1997 survey were involved in the FCP and to ascertain that we had racial/ethnic and geographical diversity. Result of survey "Early Results of a Statewide Initiative to Involve Faith Communities in HIV Prevention" was published in the *Journal of Public Health Management Practices* in 2008. 14 (5), 429-436.

Between 2006-2007a survey was self administered to program participants who attended regional events and activities. The purpose of the survey was to get a profile of program participants and to assess if the project was meeting its stated objective. 590 individuals completed the survey. The results indicate that 82 percent of participants were Christians who felt that their knowledge increased a lot as a result of attending the regional events and has resulted in increased HIV prevention and health care efforts in their faith communities.

In 2008, a five page self administered survey, similar to the one that was administered to faith institutions in 1997, was mailed statewide to NYSDOH AIDS Institute funded direct service providers. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from CBOs on existing HIV programs and activities in faith communities, assess their willingness to work with faith communities and to identify barriers or challenges to establishing and sustaining collaborative relationships with faith communities to advance HIV prevention and care efforts.

Regional Activities During 2010-2011 Have Included...

Bronx

- Clergy Impacted by HIV/AIDS

Brooklyn

- Stigma & HIV/AIDS

Central

- Re-entry and HIV: how faith based ministries can support those who are returning to the community

Long Island

- HIV/AIDS & Young People:

Northeastern

- Impact of HIV/AIDS on African Americans: What faith communities need to know

Queens

- Intergenerational Communication: "You and Me Together - Let's Talk About It"

Western

- Voices of Faith: Latino Clergy Responding to the HIV/AIDS Pandemic!

The results of the survey indicate that 95 percent, almost all of the CBOs, were somewhat interested in providing HIV prevention services to faith communities. However, the lack of financial resources, faith organizations' beliefs related to same sex relationships and condom use, and the lack of staff were the most common barriers to providing prevention/education services to faith based organizations. The Faith Communities Project is currently developing an article to report the findings.

Academic Partnerships/Collaborations: In 2012, the AIDS Institute Division of HIV/STD/Hepatitis C Prevention in partnership with The Office of Community and Minority Affairs at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University convened a forum series, to explore the intersection of faith and health; to explore if the integration of faith and health-related topics in the curriculum of medical, public health and seminary programs can foster sustainable partnerships between faith communities and community/public health institutions to enhance public health response to epidemics. Over 300 persons attended the regional forum series:

- On 3/16, New York Theological Seminary hosted and cosponsored the first forum in partnership with Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in New York City, and community based organizations and faith communities in NYC.
- On 4/20, Colgate Rochester Crozer hosted and cosponsored the second forum in partnership with St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, Northeastern Seminary at Robert Wesleyan College and community based organizations in Rochester.
- On 4/16, the University Of Albany School Of Public Health hosted and cosponsored the third form in partnership with Albany Medical College and the Capital Region Theological Center.

Regional Activities During 2011-2012 Have Included...

Bronx

- AIDS IN 2012 National HIV Prevention Strategy

Brooklyn

- Impact of Harm Reduction on HIV/AIDS

Central

- The Impact of HIV/AIDS on African American

Hudson Valley

- Finding and Applying for Federal Grants

Long Island

- Health Issues Impacting Persons Living with HIV/AIDS

Northeastern

- Voice of Youth: Responding to the Prevention Needs of Young People

Queens

- Intimate Partner Violence & HIV/AIDS: Addressing Healthy Relationships in Faith Communities

Western

- Hidden Infections HIV, STI and Hepatitis C

The forum agenda included a keynote presentation by Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding; conversations with academic deans, students, and seasoned practitioners on preparing medical/social work and nursing students to address faith related issues and preparing divinity students to address health related issues, on the value of integrating these topics in the preparation of future practitioners; examples of current academic and community

practices of integrating faith and health and, clergy perspectives on what divinity students need to know, beyond theology, to prepare them to respond to emerging health issues.

Clergy Advisory Group: In 2004, the AIDS Institute formed a Clergy Advisory Group to provide guidance to the Project on faith-related issues. Since its creation, the Advisory Group has assisted the AIDS Institute and the Department of Health to develop technical assistance and educational materials for faith leaders and communities.

Resources for Faith Communities: The AIDS Institute developed several resources that are available on our website and were developed to assist faith communities to respond to HIV related issues:

- **A Guide to HIV/AIDS Education in Faith Communities** (available in English and Spanish) – a reference manual for faith community leaders to use in developing strategies to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It includes basic HIV prevention information; suggestions for developing HIV ministries and providing pastoral care; age-appropriate educational information and activities, and an extensive list of resources. Download from our website: www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/faith_communities
- **Video: Voices of Faith: Faith Communities' Response to HIV/AIDS.** A video containing 11 different brief segments featuring faith leader from various religious and spiritual traditions speaking on how they address HIV and AIDS in their congregations and communities. Video is free and can be ordered on line: www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/publications
- **Resource Directory of Faith-based Ministries and Services**– a listing of faith-based ministries and services available in faith communities and faith-based organizations throughout New York State. The faith-based communities and organizations in the directory, voluntarily requested to be listed. Please contact Carol Tyrell, if you would like your congregation to be listed. The directory can be downloaded from our website: www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/faith_communities

For more information: To learn more about promoting the involvement of faith communities in HIV prevention in New York State, please contact Carol Tyrell, Faith Communities Project Coordinator at the AIDS Institute's Division of HIV Prevention, at 518/473-2300. Carol can also be reached at COT01@health.state.ny.us.

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Suggested Strategies for Working with Faith Communities

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide helpful, practical advice to service providers who are trying to create and maintain relationships with the faith leaders and their communities. Information is based on 3 forums held between August, 1999 and June, 2000 with providers and faith community leaders.

Exploring the backgrounds, histories and commonalities of faith leaders

- Acknowledge rather than challenge the theological beliefs of the faith community. Stress mutual respect.
- Visit the faith community prior to your official meeting with the pastor or faith leader.
- While attending church services, introduce yourself during welcoming phase of service.
- Use "The Handbook of Denominations" for reference on a particular faith.
- Attend projects within the church, such as special ministry meetings, lunch programs and community events.
- Read church bulletins and materials and find out if the church has any newsletters or web sites and e-mail addresses.
- Be flexible with your availability on evenings and weekends.
- Try to identify people within the congregation who are open to your ideas.
- Utilize AIDS Institute religious survey results and see which faith communities are willing to be approached.
- View your relationship with faith leaders as an on-going process. You may need to start small.

Relationship building and providing HIV/AIDS education

- Provide faith leaders with facts regarding prevalence and incidence in their immediate area.
- Educate key leaders in the community, call one another and work to co-sponsor forums and health fairs.
- Provide HIV education at church meetings and other community events such as Black Church Week of Prayer and healing meetings.
- Share newsletter mailing lists and e-mail addresses.
- Include the faith leaders in service treatment plans and invite leaders to attend AIDS 101 training.
- Provide free samples of materials and grant funding information to congregations.
- Incorporate AIDS issues in health forums intended for broader health-related issues.
- Focus on the concordance between the religious doctrine of non-judgmental compassionate care and the acceptance of people with HIV/AIDS.
- Acknowledge that sex, sexual orientation and condom distribution are difficult issues for ministers to speak about.
- Tailor messages to specific congregations and stress the benefits of outreach awareness programs.