

HIV-RELATED STIGMA FACT SHEET



When we support people living with HIV, we make it easier for them to live healthy lives.

WHAT IS HIV-RELATED STIGMA?

HIV-related stigma refers to negative beliefs, feelings and attitudes towards people living with HIV, their families, and people who work with them (HIV service providers). It also extends to members of groups that have been heavily impacted by HIV, such as men who have sex with men, female sex workers, and intravenous drug users.

Here are a few examples

1. Believing that only certain groups of people can get HIV
2. Making moral judgments about people who take steps to prevent HIV transmission
3. Feeling that people deserve to get HIV because of their choices

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

While stigma refers to an attitude or belief, discrimination is the behavior that results from those attitudes or beliefs. HIV discrimination is the act of treating people living with HIV differently than those without HIV.

Here are a few examples

1. A health care provider refusing to provide care or services to a person living with HIV
2. Refusing casual contact with someone living with HIV
3. Socially isolating a member of a community because they are HIV positive

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION?

HIV stigma and discrimination affect the emotional well-being and mental health of people living with HIV. People living with HIV often internalize the stigma they experience and begin to develop a negative self-image. Persons living with HIV may fear being discriminated against or judged negatively if their HIV status is revealed.

“Internalized stigma” or “self-stigma” happens when people take in the negative ideas and stereotypes about people living with HIV and start to apply them to themselves. HIV internalized stigma can lead to feelings of shame, fear of disclosure, isolation, and despair. These feelings can keep people from getting tested and treated for HIV.

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WHAT CAUSES HIV-RELATED STIGMA?

- **Fear:** HIV-related stigma is rooted in a fear of HIV.
- **Early Images:** Many of our ideas about HIV come from the HIV images that first appeared in the early 1980s.
- **Misconception:** There are still misconceptions about how HIV is transmitted and what it means to live with HIV today.
- **Transmission Knowledge:** Additionally, many people think of HIV as a virus that only certain groups get.
- **Inadequate information:** This leads to negative value judgments about people who are living with HIV. The fact is that anyone can contract HIV.



The lack of information and awareness combined with outdated beliefs lead people to fear people living with HIV.

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT HIV-RELATED STIGMA?



GET THE FACTS.

Learn HIV basic facts and what it means to live with HIV. Having the facts can help reduce misconceptions and decrease HIV-related stigma.



LEARN HOW TO TALK ABOUT HIV.

Talking openly about HIV can help normalize the subject. But be mindful of how you talk about HIV and people living with HIV.



BEGIN TO TAKE ACTION.

We can help end HIV-related stigma through our words and actions in our everyday lives.



SHOW LOVE TO PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

to help them live long and enjoy life to the fullest.

Adapted from HIV Stigma Fact Sheet U.S. Centers for Disease Control. <https://www.cdc.gov/stophivtogether/library/stop-hiv-stigma/fact-sheets/cdc-lsht-stigma-factsheet.pdf> Accessed March 30, 2020

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