



# **PART OF THE SOLUTION**

**A  
PLAN  
OF  
ACTION**  
for Canada  
to reduce  
HIV/AIDS-related  
stigma and  
discrimination

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CANADIAN | RÉSEAU  
HIV/AIDS | JURIDIQUE  
L E G A L | CANADIEN  
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# **Part of the Solution:**

## **A Plan of Action for Canada to Reduce HIV/AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination**

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Ce document est également disponible en français.

## The Problem & The Plan

The stigma and discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS is a serious problem. Today we know more than ever about the science of HIV. We know how to prevent HIV infection and how to treat people living with HIV infection. Despite all we know, people living with HIV/AIDS still face stigmatization and discrimination every day. They face stigmatization and discrimination within their own communities, and from outside those communities. This keeps people living with HIV/AIDS out of the workforce and on the margins of society. Stigmatization and discrimination also prevents people living with HIV/AIDS from getting the health care and other services they need to stay healthy.

People living with HIV/AIDS are not the only ones who suffer from stigma and discrimination. Groups of people linked with HIV/AIDS in the public mind - like intravenous drug users, gay men, sex workers, and people who come from countries where HIV/AIDS is widespread – also face stigma and discrimination. This stigma and discrimination stands in the way of people protecting themselves from being infected with HIV. It also prevents people from coming forward to get tested for HIV.

Reducing the stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS will not be easy. A plan of action is clearly needed. The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network consulted with people from all over Canada to develop just such a plan. We listened to men and women living with HIV/AIDS, people who inject illegal drugs, HIV-positive youth, lesbian/gay/bi/trans people, Aboriginal people and people from other ethno-cultural communities.

The result is **A Plan of Action for Canada to Reduce HIV/AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination**. This booklet summarizes the Plan of Action.

## Stigma & Discrimination

Stigmatization leads to discrimination.

**stigma:** A mark of disgrace; a sign of moral blemish; stain or reproach caused by dishonourable conduct.

**stigmatization:** A social process of devaluation; people devalue others or themselves because of some mark(s) or characteristic(s) they have or appear to have. Expressed in fear, avoidance, shame, blame, and passing judgment.

**discrimination:** Unfair treatment of a person or group based on prejudice; generally refers to treating one group of people worse than another based on their ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, political views or another personal characteristic.

One quarter of the people who responded to a recent Canadian survey were uncomfortable associating with people with HIV/ AIDS. Another forty percent had only a moderate level of comfort. Almost half of the people agreed that people infected with HIV should not be allowed to serve the public working in jobs like dentists or cooks. And one in ten people still believes that people infected with HIV have gotten what they deserve.

– EKOS Research Associates.  
*HIV/AIDS – An Attitudinal Survey* (2003)

## Governments are Responsible for Taking Action

Governments are responsible for taking action to reduce HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

Human rights are universal rights. In other words, all people have human rights because they are human. Human rights derive from the dignity and worth of each human being. They cannot be waived or taken away. Human rights are also legal rights.

Non-discrimination is a fundamental principle of human rights law.

Under international law, governments are obliged to respect, protect, and fulfill the human rights of all people. Not all human rights can be immediately achieved. So governments are obliged to take immediate action to “progressively” realize human rights over time.

**Respecting** a human right means that governments must not violate a person’s human rights. For example, governments cannot deny prisoners with HIV/AIDS the same quality of medical care that is available in the community. This would violate prisoners’ right to the highest attainable standard of health. It would also be discrimination against prisoners.

**Protecting** a human right means that governments have to prevent people from violating the right, and to provide a way to take action when the right is violated. For example, governments should protect people living with HIV/AIDS from discrimination in their jobs, and should adequately fund human rights commissions to investigate complaints of discrimination.

**Fulfilling** a human right means that governments have to take steps – pass laws, put in place policies, set up programs, provide funding – to make the right real for people. For example, governments have an obligation to ensure that all people can get essential medical care. Governments must also fund programs that help people protect themselves against getting infected with HIV.

## **Goals & Action for Reducing HIV/AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination**

The Plan of Action is made up of 18 goals. Under each goal, the Plan of Action lists a number of actions that can be taken to reduce HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination. It also provides examples of actions that community-based groups are taking to reduce HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

Governments have the primary responsibility for taking action to reduce stigma and discrimination. Government commitment, in one form or another, is needed to achieve all 18 goals and the actions listed under those goals.

For some actions in the Plan of Action governments must play the leading role. For other actions governments should provide groups and organizations with the funding to do the work that is needed. Governments should make special efforts to get resources to organizations and groups of people who are on the front-lines in the fight against HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

Here are the 18 goals. For some of the goals we have included ideas for work that needs to be funded by governments and projects that have already been undertaken by community-based groups.

# 1.

## Participation of People Living with HIV/AIDS and Vulnerable to HIV

> > >

*People living with HIV and populations at risk will have opportunities to participate in a meaningful way in identifying their unique needs and in planning, delivering and evaluating programs and services. Our response will be more effective when the communities most affected are fully engaged in promoting their own health and well-being, and all services are client-centred.*

*– Leading Together, An HIV/AIDS Action Plan for All Canada  
(Public Health Agency of Canada)*

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# 2.

## Changing Public Attitudes

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# 3.

## Informing Media Coverage

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*The Board of AIDS New Brunswick/SIDA Nouveau-Brunswick is working on an HIV/AIDS awareness package for media in New Brunswick that highlights critical issues in the province, including stigma and discrimination, and includes a section on terminology and the power of words.*

*– Haley Flaro, Executive Director*

## 4.

### **Supporting People Living with HIV/AIDS and People Vulnerable to HIV**

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## 5.

### **Strengthening Community-Based Education and Advocacy**

>>> *Through AIDS Calgary's Equality Project we are already involved in a number of activities that are described in the [draft plan of action on HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination], particularly in the area of human rights education and advocacy. In support of the plan, we could share what we have learned, the research we have done, and the educational tools we have created. In the future, our program would like to focus more on human rights and HIV/AIDS education for health care providers, employers, landlords and lawyers.... In order to continue our work in this area, and to expand it to include the actions proposed in this plan, we would need continued, stable funding to support a full-time human rights worker.*

– Jessica Leech, AIDS Calgary

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## 6.

### **Greater Awareness of Human Rights**

## 7.

### Increase Access to Legal Information and Advice

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## 8.

### Working with Human Rights Commissions

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## 9.

### More Targeted Community HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention

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*We've known since a national 1991 survey that Vancouver's gay men were more likely to practice unprotected anal sex than were men elsewhere in Canada. Yet, less than 0.1 percent of the \$11-million provincial AIDS program was being applied to gay men's prevention by the year 2001. And by that year, the federal government was funding only a program for Asian men's outreach – since suspended – and one gay men's outreach worker in Victoria. This is insanity!*

*– G Kirby. Safer Sex Now: survey finds education needed. Xtra! West (8 January 2004)*

# 10.

## Client-Centred Health Services

>>> *The hospital system is very bad. They do things they shouldn't be doing. They destroyed my whole life. The nurse told my neighbour that my husband died of AIDS when I told her not to. The nurse told the neighbour because she said she needs to know in order to protect her family [from HIV].*

– *Woman of African descent living with HIV in A Handa, A Negash. HIV Endemic Task Force: Report on Phase Two of Community Consultation (April 2003)*

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# 11.

## Affordable, Accessible & Adequate Housing

>>> *Homeless women in Toronto between the ages of 18 and 44 were 10 times more likely to die than women in the general population. "Given that HIV/AIDS and drug overdose are the most common causes of death in these women, programs to prevent and treat HIV infection and to improve access to treatment for drug addiction are essential. Mental health issues must also be addressed, given the high prevalence of depression among homeless women and their high risk of suicide."*

– *AM Cheung, SW Hwang. Risk of death among homeless women: a cohort study and review of the literature. Canadian Medical Association Journal 2004; 170(8): 1243-1247.*

## 12.

### Protecting People in Employment

>>> *A new AIDS-in-the-Workplace program being implemented in Québec emphasizes the rights of workers living with HIV/AIDS. The program tackles issues such as confidentiality of HIV status, access to insurance benefits, discrimination, and the need for employers to take measures to accommodate the disabilities of workers. The program is run by COCQ-sida, a coalition of community groups, with funding from the Québec Ministry of Health and Social Services.*

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## 13.

### Education for Youth that is Accurate, Appropriate to their Age and Not Judgmental

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## 14.

### Fair treatment for Immigrants and Refugees

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## 15.

### Best Practices in HIV Testing for Immigrants and Refugees

## 16.

### International Cooperation Based on Human Rights

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## 17.

### Participatory and Inclusive Research

>>> *Ownership control access and possession (OCAP) is a political term that is being used by Aboriginal Peoples to highlight the right to self-determination in the area of HIV/AIDS research. As Aboriginal communities and organizations increase their capacity to conduct their own research these principles will become increasingly visible.*

– Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

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## 18.

### Evaluation of Programs to Reduce Stigma and Discrimination

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To find out about the actions proposed under all 18 goals, and how community-based groups are taking action, please read **A Plan of Action for Canada to reduce HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.**

## Use the Plan of Action ... Be Part of the Solution

All people and groups have a role to play in reducing HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination. The Plan of Action is a model for the types of actions that can and should be taken. Everyone in Canada can use the Plan of Action to make sure that they are part of the solution, and not part of the problem.

**Elected officials** ... ensure that your government and its administration are meeting their obligations under human rights law.

**Public servants** ... ensure that your department, in its policies and programs, is meeting its obligations under human rights law.

**Public health and health care workers, educators, housing providers, and other people in community organizations** ... ensure that your organization is meeting its obligations under human rights law.

**People living with HIV/AIDS, people affected by HIV/AIDS, people vulnerable to HIV, and advocates for these groups of people** ... hold governments and other organizations responsible for meeting their obligations under human rights law.

You can **Be Part of the Solution**. You can start by taking one simple action. Write or email your Member of Parliament, or your provincial member of the assembly. Ask him or her to read the Plan of Action, and to speak out against HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

## For More Information ...

AIDS Calgary

*HIV & Human Rights: Fact Sheets*

[www.aidscalgary.org/news/briefingDocuments.shtml](http://www.aidscalgary.org/news/briefingDocuments.shtml)

Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre

*HIV does not discriminate. Do you?*

[www.doyou.cpha.ca/](http://www.doyou.cpha.ca/)

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

[www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)

Look for ...

- » A Plan of Action for Canada to Reduce HIV/AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination
- » Stories of Community Mobilization
- » Info sheets on HIV/AIDS and Discrimination

Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS

*Partnerships to Fight Stigma and Discrimination*

[www.gnpplus.net/advocacy.html](http://www.gnpplus.net/advocacy.html)

National AIDS Trust (UK)

*Are you HIV prejudiced?*

[www.areyouhivprejudiced.org/](http://www.areyouhivprejudiced.org/)

Policy Project

*Siyam'kela: Measuring HIV/AIDS-related Stigma*

[www.policyproject.com/siyamkela.cfm](http://www.policyproject.com/siyamkela.cfm)

World Health Organization.

*25 Questions & Answers on Health & Human Rights*

[www.who.int/hhr/information/25%20Questions%20and%20Answers%20on%20Health%20and%20Human%20Rights.pdf](http://www.who.int/hhr/information/25%20Questions%20and%20Answers%20on%20Health%20and%20Human%20Rights.pdf)



The complete text of **A Plan of Action for Canada to Reduce HIV/AIDS-Related Stigma and Discrimination** is available on the internet at [www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca). Paper copies can be ordered from the Canadian HIV/ AIDS Information Centre at [aidssida@cpha.ca](mailto:aidssida@cpha.ca) or 1-877-999-7740.

HIV DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE  
**DO YOU?**

[WWW.DOYOU.CPHA.CA](http://WWW.DOYOU.CPHA.CA)

