Youth Make Up 25% of New HIV Cases, Most Don’t Know Their Status

November 30, 2012

Accounting for a quarter of all new HIV infections in 2010, 60 percent of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 are unaware of their serostatus—thanks to low testing rates among youths, not to mention the failure of HIV prevention efforts to give them the tools to protect themselves, CBS News reports. Presenting data and analysis in its Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) used national surveillance data to estimate HIV prevalence among young people in 2009 and the incidence in 2010. The CDC also used the 2009 and 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System for high school students and the 2010 National Health Interview Survey for Americans between 18 and 24 years old.

Among the estimated 47,500 new infections in 2010, about 26 percent, or 12,500 cases, were in young people ages 13 to 24. Within this group, 57.4 percent were African American, 19.6 Latino, and 19.5 percent white. Sex between males accounted for 72.1 percent of new infections, heterosexual sex 19.8 percent, and injection drug use (IDU) 4 percent In addition, 3.7 percent were due to both IDU and sex between males.

All told, young people make up 6.7 percent of the estimate HIV population of 1.1 million. And while approximately 20 percent of all people with HIV do not know they are infected, 59.5 percent of young people are unaware. Despite the fact that the CDC has recommended for years that HIV testing should be adopted as a part of routine medical visits, only 22.2 percent of sexually active high school students reported ever receiving an HIV screen. Meanwhile, 34.5 percent of those between 18 and 24 reported being tested for the virus at least once.

The CDC recommended greater efforts to ensure that young people, especially men who have sex with men (MSM), “have the knowledge, skills, resources and support necessary to avoid HIV infection.” The agency said that health care providers and public health agencies should promote HIV testing among young people and also provide widespread access to sexual health services, not to mention health care and prevention services for HIV-positive youths.

To read the CBS News report, click here.

To read the CDC report, click here.

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