



POZ 2023 HIV Criminalization Poster

Use this poster to help spread the word about HIV criminalization and advocate for change.

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HIV criminalization refers to the use of HIV-specific laws to prosecute and punish people who have HIV because of their HIV status, not because of their actions. Such laws are outdated and don't reflect the current science regarding how HIV is and isn't transmitted. Instead, they put people with HIV at risk of prosecution for allegedly not disclosing their status during consensual sexual activity—even in situations where HIV is not transmitted. Some HIV-specific laws call for longer sentences for certain crimes, such as assault or sex work, simply because a person has HIV. In some states, individuals must register as a sex offender.

HIV criminalization reinforces stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV, which can discourage individuals from getting tested and accessing care and treatment. HIV criminalization also disproportionately impacts the Black, Latino and LGBTQ communities as well as people who engage in sex work.

In the United States, 25 states have HIV-specific laws on the books and nine states have sentencing enhancements that apply to people living with HIV.

The good news is that there is a growing movement to reform these types of laws. Advocates are working together nationwide—and around the world—to change policies and legislation that discriminate against individuals based on their health status. Thirteen states have already reformed or repealed parts of their HIV-specific criminal laws. Visit poz.com/criminalization to find resources and learn the facts, and then help spread the word and advocate for change.

How To Protect Yourself Against HIV Criminalization

Educate Yourself

Find out about the specific laws in your state.

Document Your Disclosure

Having your partner acknowledge your HIV status in writing or in front of a witness may help protect you from prosecution.

Know Your Rights

If you are accused of an HIV-related crime, exercise your right to remain silent until you talk to a lawyer who is knowledgeable about HIV criminal law.

FEBRUARY 28

HIV IS NOT A CRIME NATIONAL AWARENESS DAY

This day is intended to raise awareness of and promote advocacy around unjust laws that criminalize people living with HIV and discriminate against or stigmatize individuals because of their health status.

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