Houston HIV Nonprofit FLAS Launches “Project Vive” to Reach Latinos

Latinos comprise nearly 30% of Houston’s HIV cases. Project Vive aims to educate and test Spanish-speaking communities.

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FLAS, an HIV nonprofit in Houston that serves the city’s Latino population, launched Project Vive to help educate and test Spanish-speaking communities, reports ABC13.com.

Bolstered by a federal grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the HIV project hopes to reach marginalized communities that experience poverty, low literacy levels and a lack of health insurance. Its HIV education efforts also include fighting stigma, connecting people to care and treatment and raising awareness about pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a pill or injection that prevents HIV-negative people from contracting the virus.

“The bigger barrier is the stigma. People, they are scared to get tested for HIV,” Elia Chino, the founder of FLAS, told the news station. She started FLAS, which stands for Fundacion Latino Americana de Accion Social, in 1994 after losing many friends to AIDS.

“We have over 30,000 people in the city of Houston that are living with HIV,” Chino told ABC.

Watch the ABC13.com news segment below:

“People have to get educated to understand HIV,” Eddie Gonzalez, an advocate living with HIV who works with FLAS, told ABC. “If they don’t get educated, we’re not gonna stop the stigma. And if we don’t stop the stigma, people living with HIV are gonna be afraid to come out, are gonna be afraid to go get tested or gonna be afraid to continue treatment.”

It’s important to reach the city’s Latino community. Latinos made up 29%of the city’s HIV cases in 2019, which is slightly higher than the national average. In the United States, Latinos comprise about 19% of the total population but accounted for 27% of new HIV cases in 2018, according to the POZ basics section on “HIV and Latinos.” This means that among the estimated 1.2 million Americans living with HIV that year, 274,000 were Latino, making Latino men and women four times more likely to have HIV than their non-Hispanic white counterparts.

Only Black Americans experience higher HIV rates. While African Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population, they account for 42% of all new HIV diagnoses, with a total of about 15,300 new cases reported in 2019, according to CDC data quoted in the POZ Basics section "HIV and African Americans." What's more, Black people are about eight times more likely than white people and about twice as likely as Latinos to be diagnosed with HIV.

In related news, recent data suggest that the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) is not keeping up with the increasing HIV rates in Black and Latino communities. Similarly, the lifetime risk of acquiring HIV is dramatically higher for Black men and women compared with other racial and ethnic groups in the United States, but Latinos and Native Americans also see disproportionately higher HIV risks.

To find more articles about HIV and health in these communities, click #Latino and #African American. POZ also includes the Spanish-language sections "VIH/SIDA en Español" and "POZ Forums—Foros Comunitarios de POZ" in addition to articles such as "10 Consejos Para Mejorar Tu Salud Sexual."

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