



Defining the Term “Syndemic” in the Context of HIV Advocacy

Nate Fecik, the Syndemic Senior Advisor with the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP), shares his insight.

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Many of our colleagues often ask the HIV.gov team about the term “syndemic” and how it applies to our work. HIV.gov recently spoke with our colleague Nate Fecik, MPH, Syndemic Senior Advisor, Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP), who shared the following and encouraged us to share with our readers information about an upcoming webinar on HHS’s approach to syndemics.

“OIDP has been working with federal partners to define the term syndemic because many of us work across multiple, inter-related health conditions (e.g., hepatitis, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, substance use, mental health) and their root causes; a common definition of syndemics can increase awareness of their impact on overall health as well as mobilize and align the public health workforce and others, including community, to implement more holistic approaches and improve health outcomes,” Nate said.

Definition: Syndemics

Nate also shared with us that federal colleagues formed a Syndemic Steering Committee in 2022 and have developed a common HHS syndemic definition:

Syndemics occur when two or more diseases or health conditions cluster and interact within a population because of social and structural factors and inequities, leading to an excess burden of disease and continuing health disparities. Syndemics arise when:

1. Two (or more) diseases or health conditions cluster and interact within a population;
2. Social and structural factors and inequities allow for diseases or health conditions to cluster; and
3. The clustering of disease or health conditions results in disease interaction, either biologic or social or behavioral, leading to an excess burden of disease and continuing health disparities.

Syndemics Webinar

Many in our communities have been adopting a syndemic approach in their work for years. We understand that there are various perspectives and definitions associated with the term syndemic. Let's continue the conversation on our syndemic approaches and best practices during the May webinar.

The webinar will be announced on HIV.gov in early May.

Learn More about Syndemics

- [Read](#) about the 2023 Syndemics Solutions Summit, a Collaborative Approach to Advancing Health Services.
- [View](#) a Syndemic Approach to STI Interventions and Prevention video.
- [Read](#) (PDF, 3.25MB) a syndemic infographic from CDC.
- [Read](#) the blog Still Reaching: The Syndemics that Complicate and Characterize How Drugs and HIV Intersect in People's Lives.

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