Summer of Pride and LGBTQI+ Health

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Celebrating June as LGBTQI+ Pride Month brings me great joy, as it is a time to recognize the community's contributions while remembering the challenges faced by so many. Given this reality, I appreciate the powerful reminder from President Biden's Press Secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, "Your identity is not your weakness; it is your superpower."

During the past year, strides led by LGBTQI+ advocacy have yielded significant public health achievements. One such achievement is the mobilization of the community to educate and organize around mpox vaccination and our efforts to prevent a resurgence.

Additional achievements include the recently updated FDA blood donor guidance, which overturned longstanding policies that excluded gay and bisexual people from donating blood, and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps' updated medical standards to accept future applicants with chronic hepatitis B and HIV.

Despite these and other advances, it's unfortunate that LGBTQI+ communities still face disparate health inequalities. LGBTQI+ people are at an increased risk for adverse health outcomes, such as HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), substance abuse, and mental health-related distress. They are also more likely to lack health insurance, experience health care-related discrimination, and be denied health care by a provider.

Advancing Health Equity for LGBTQI+ Communities

At the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), we are working to ensure full equality for LGBTQI+ people and addressing LGBTQI+ health disparities head-on. This summer, we hope you will join us in sharing resources to advance the health of LGBTQI+ communities. I want to highlight important ways my office, the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health at HHS, is working to advance health equity for LGBTQI+ communities.

We coordinate the cross-agency Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) initiative. This initiative aims to end the HIV epidemic and highlights four key strategies that, when implemented together,

can help us all focus on diagnosing, treating, preventing, and responding to HIV.

We collaborate with LGBTQI+ communities to leverage critical scientific advances and coordinate to support highly successful programs and resources. The success of this initiative depends on partners from all sectors of society working together, including people with HIV or at risk for HIV.

Additional HHS Resources to Use and Share

As part of the EHE initiative, HHS developed the community-informed "I am a Work of ART" national viral suppression campaign and its Spanish-language version, "Celebro mi salud," which feature creative partners who represent the diversity of the HIV community. The campaign aims to encourage people with HIV who are not in care to seek care, remain in care, and achieve viral suppression by taking antiretroviral therapy (ART).

HIV.gov also features valuable and timely updates to expand the visibility of federal HIV policies, programs, and resources. The website provides information to increase knowledge about HIV and access to HIV services. For example, the HIV.gov Services Locator makes it easier to find nearby HIV services, mpox vaccines, and other services.

The first-ever Sexually Transmitted Infections National Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (PDF, 2.49MB) offers a roadmap to reverse the recent dramatic rise in STIs in the United States, which disproportionately burdens LGBTQI+ subgroups.

As the Summer of Pride and related events continue across the country, I encourage you to use and share these resources and continue celebrating the community's achievements. Please follow HIV.gov for more information and visit CDC's Get Healthy and Ready for Summer 2023 resource webpage.

Please also check out two videos from my office's staff about the significance of Pride within OIDP and why it matters to us as an organization, as well as why our OIDP team is passionate about supporting and celebrating Pride.

Happy Pride!

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