



hand in hand: a guide for spiritual leaders to prevent HIV transmission and eliminate HIV stigma within Australian migrant and refugee communities

this resource provides you, as a spiritual leader, with insights on how you can contribute to preventing HIV transmission and address HIV stigma in your community and congregation.

Why spiritual leaders?

As a spiritual leader, you hold a place of respect, authority and leadership in society. As such, you have the opportunity to make a real difference in addressing HIV/AIDS in your community and congregation. Your position can play a pivotal role in preventing HIV transmission; addressing the debilitating effects of HIV stigma, and advocating for, and providing care and support to, people living with HIV.

HIV in Australia

- an estimated 25,708 people were living with HIV at the end of 2012
- of the 5,525 people newly diagnosed with HIV between 2008 and 2012, approximately 2,387 were born overseas
- among migrants who were newly diagnosed between 2008 and 2012, the majority (1,391) were born in sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, North Africa and the Middle East

- more women (835) than men (556) from sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, were newly diagnosed with HIV between 2008 and 2012

What behaviours increase the risk of contracting HIV?

- unprotected sexual intercourse
- sharing needles, syringes and other injecting equipment

HIV cannot be transmitted by

- vaccination or immunisation
- shaking hands
- sharing utensils or eating together
- sharing a bathroom or toilet
- insect bites
- kissing

How can a person prevent HIV transmission?

- Having sexual relations with a mutually faithful partner
- If you or your sexual partner is living with HIV, use condoms correctly (to avoid breaking or slipping) and consistently (every time, from start to finish) for every sexual act
- Getting tested and treated for any sexually transmissible infections, including HIV
- Avoiding sharing injecting equipment such as needles

How can people know their HIV status?

A blood test is the most accurate way for a person to know if he or she is infected with HIV. Early detection and treatment helps a person with HIV to stay healthy and reduces the chance of transmission.

To reduce HIV transmission and eliminate HIV stigma you should



1. Know the facts

- Know the scientific facts about HIV/AIDS



4. Provide spiritual counselling, compassion and support

- Use spiritual teachings or religious scriptures to emphasise compassion, healing and support for people living with HIV
- Give hope and reassurance to those affected by HIV/AIDS to enable them to live meaningful and dignified lives
- Provide spiritual care and support to people living with HIV



2. Break the silence

- Talk about HIV/AIDS prevention in your meetings
- Encourage community members to go for testing and seek treatment



3. Take a stand against HIV stigma

- Avoid judging people living with HIV
- Avoid using language that discriminate people living with HIV
- Challenge attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that discriminate people living with HIV
- Include people living with HIV in spiritual outreach and discussions as a way of affirming and enhancing their dignity



5. Partner with others

- Partner with other organisations and individuals in preventing HIV transmission and eliminating stigma

Websites with resources on scientific facts on HIV

- Get the facts on HIV <http://www.worldaidsday.org.au/internet/wad/publishing.nsf/content/get-the-facts-1>
- Australian HIV and AIDS Statistics <http://www.avert.org/australia-hiv-aids-statistics.htm>
- Annual Surveillance Reports on HIV, viral hepatitis, STIs <http://www.kirby.unsw.edu.au/surveillance/>
- Supporting the HIV, viral hepatitis and sexual health workforce <http://www.ashm.org.au/>
- Better health channel http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/HIV_and_AIDS?open
- The Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) <http://www.afao.org.au/>

Websites with resources about faith and HIV

- HIV and faith <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hiv/aids/resources/>
- Faith - Aidsmap www.aidsmap.com/Faith/page/1693440/
- Using Faith to Conquer HIV/AIDS and Its Stigma <http://www.positivechampions.org/hiv-faith-2/>



multicultural health
& support service

For more information contact the Multicultural Health and Support Service (MHSS)

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¹For more information about HIV/AIDS prevalence in Australia, see *The Kirby Institute for Infection and Immunity in Society. 2013. HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia annual surveillance report 2012.* <http://www.kirby.unsw.edu.au/surveillance/2013-annual-surveillance-report-hiv-viral-hepatitis-stis> (accessed 6th May, 2013).

²For more information on how spiritual leaders can prevent HIV transmission and eliminate stigma see, UNICEF (2004). *The role of religious leaders in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.* Available [http://www.nacp.gov.pk/library/reports/Advocacy%20&%20Communication/Role_of_Religious_Leaders%20\(%20English%20\).pdf](http://www.nacp.gov.pk/library/reports/Advocacy%20&%20Communication/Role_of_Religious_Leaders%20(%20English%20).pdf) (accessed 20th December, 2013); UNICEF (2003) *What religious leaders can do about HIV/AIDS: Action for Children and Young People.* Available http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Religious_leaders_Aids.pdf accessed 22nd December, 2013).