

# TEST and TREAT LATINO HIV/AIDS in FLORIDA



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Response to the  
National HIV/AIDS Strategy

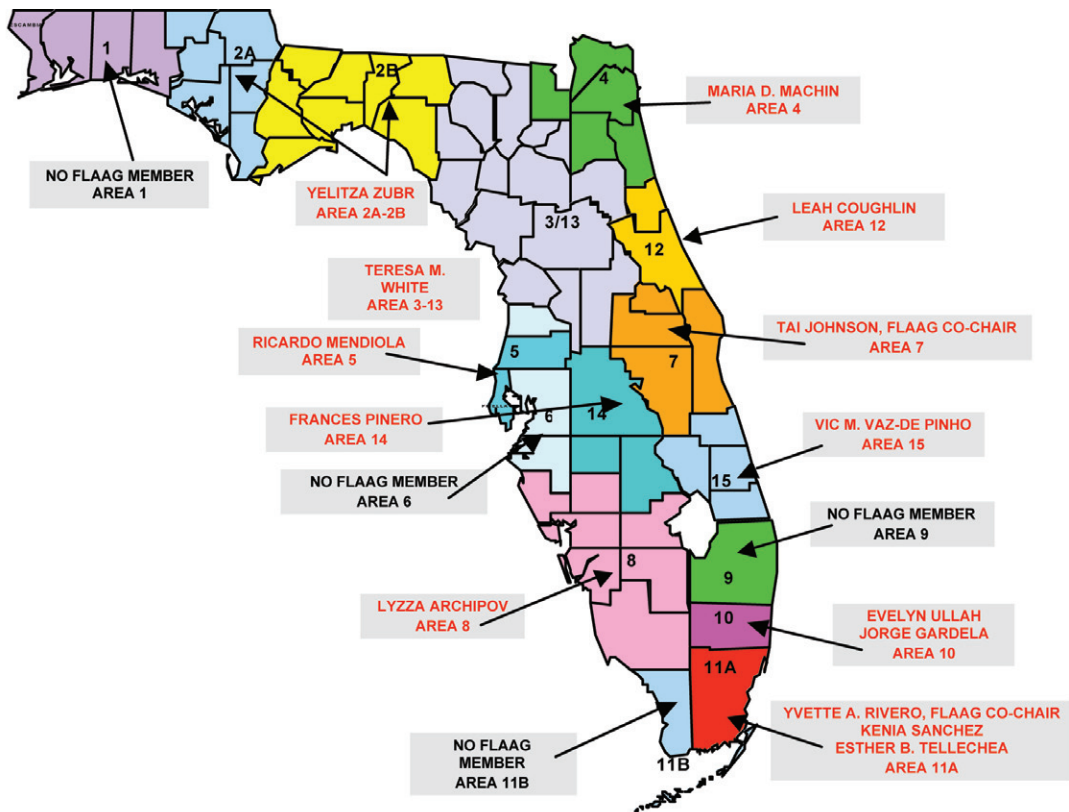
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Florida's Latino community is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the state making up 21.5% of the state population. In Florida, Latinos represent the largest ethnic/racial minority group residing in the United States. The terms Hispanic or Latino are terms used interchangeably to identify people from Latin America, the Caribbean and US born people of Latino parentage. The term Hispanic also refers to a person who culturally shares the Spanish language, while the term Latino attempts to be more inclusive of people of various ethnicity and races from Latin America and the Caribbean. Such terms imply that people with roots and cultural ties from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Columbia and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are the same culturally, linguistically and share the same experiences. Such assumptions lead to a failure to understand the unique cultural and historical differences. In Florida, people identify themselves as either Hispanics or Latino or use the term interchangeably. Such self identifications have also been evidenced in US census data and other data collection surveys.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, Florida has reported more than 121,000 cumulative AIDS cases among adults through 2010. Since 1997, when HIV became reportable, Florida has reported nearly 47,000 adult HIV cases through 2010. Every county in Florida has reported an HIV or AIDS case. Florida has a total of 93,053 persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA). The proportion of newly reported HIV cases among adult Hispanics (age 13+) increased from 16% in 2000 to 21% in 2009. In Florida, in 2009, the HIV case rate among adult Hispanic men was 2 times higher than that for white men and 2 times higher for adult Hispanic women than that among white women. Among adults (age 13+) one in 113 Hispanic men and one in 438 Hispanic women were living with HIV/AIDS in 2009, compared to one in 205 white men and one in 1,139 white women.

According to both national and Florida data, the survival time from AIDS diagnosis to death significantly shorter for Hispanics than whites. Of the AIDS cases that died in Florida from 2001-2009, whites had a median survival of 63 months compared with blacks who had 44 months and Hispanics who had 47 months.

Of those living HIV/AIDS cases among Hispanics through 2009, 35% were US born, 17% Cuban born, 12% Puerto Rican born, 6% Mexican born, 12% were born elsewhere and the remaining 18% had an unknown country of birth. In 2009 HIV was the 6th leading cause of death in Florida for Hispanic men ages 25-44, and the 7th leading cause of death for Hispanic women for ages 25-44.

Source: The Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS: & CDC.HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2009.

F.L.A.A.G.

Member Quote:

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*"I pray every day that we stop fearing testing for HIV and embrace it like any other test, because early detection is important for continued quality of life!"* Yvette

Rivero MPH, FI/C  
AETC Southeast  
Coordinator and  
F.L.A.A.G.  
co-chair.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

F.L.A.A.G.  
Member Quote:

*“Getting tested for HIV is the most important step you can do for yourself and your family... Don’t delay and know your status today”*  
Tai Johnson, Area 7  
Minority AIDS  
Coordinator and  
F.L.A.A.G. co-chair.

In July 2004, the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS convened the Florida HIV/AIDS Latino Leaders Advisory Committee. The role of the committee is to bring forth the voices of the Latino community and local county health department leadership in an advisory role to the Bureau of HIV/AIDS. This allows the Latino community to address HIV/AIDS issues in Florida and it provides a forum for the Latino community to collaborate with the Bureau in developing HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment public policy, programs and leadership.

In June 2009, the Florida HIV/AIDS Latino Leaders Advisory Committee was renamed the Florida Latino HIV/AIDS Advisory Group (FLAAG). The purpose of the group is to reduce new HIV infections and eliminate racial/ethnic HIV/AIDS disparities by promoting HIV prevention, counseling, testing and linkage to care programs. The overall mission of FLAAG is to develop linkages between minority community leaders, minority community-based organizations (CBO) and the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS by providing advocacy, resources and strategies to increase quality HIV/AIDS services to Latino communities.

Immediately, the group began working on an initiative that would mobilize all segments of the Latino community in a coordinated effort to address HIV/AIDS among Latinos. As a result, on October 7-8, 2010, **Latinos en Acción of Broward County** and the members of the **Florida Latino HIV/AIDS Advisory Group** held the first **Latino HIV/AIDS Leadership Summit**. The Summit organizers counted on the support of the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, the Broward and Miami-Dade County Health Departments, and the Statewide Latino AIDS Coordinator, Sandra Estévez. The Summit was held at the Pride Center in Wilton Manors, Florida. It began with a welcome reception and exhibit on October 7, and continued with a full day of speakers, workgroups, and awards on October 8. The Summit was held in recognition of National Latino AIDS Awareness Day, and was well-attended, with 172 leaders from around Florida taking part in the historic event. The purpose of this grassroots effort was to mobilize key stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS throughout Florida, and to develop Action Items to assist communities throughout the state in raising awareness of HIV/AIDS in the Hispanic/Latino community.

The Latino HIV/AIDS Leadership Summit was the culmination of the work of Latinos en Acción of Broward County – a broad coalition of community members, service providers, and health department staff – who are concerned with the impact of HIV/AIDS in the Latino community in the state of Florida. The group came together to articulate an agenda around six primary focus populations: high-risk heterosexuals, men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender, injection drug users (IDU), migrant communities, and faith communities.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTINUED)

These populations were selected due to high HIV seroprevalence, a scarcity of information, intense barriers to health care, or their importance to broad community work with Latinos in Florida. For each target community, summit participants identified goals and defined achievable objectives toward mobilizing that community within a year. Action plans differed by target population, as they had varying levels of needs. Many of the action items are directly connected to the National HIV/AIDS Strategy.

During the summit, the participants were very cognizant of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) as they made their recommendations. The National HIV/AIDS Strategy has three primary goals: 1) reducing the number of people who become infected with HIV; 2) increasing access to care and improving health outcomes for people living with HIV; and, 3) reducing HIV-related health disparities. As members of the Florida Latino HIV/AIDS Advisory Group, we believe it is extremely important to align our priorities with those in the NHAS.

The following are strategies and recommendations from issue areas identified by participants during the summit in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic within Florida's Latino communities. The issues are categorized into three areas: Reducing the number of Latinos who become infected with HIV, Increasing Access to Care and Improving Health Outcomes for Latinos Living with HIV, and Reducing HIV-Related Health Disparities. These recommendations will assist the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, county health departments and community partners to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Florida's Latino communities.

F.L.A.A.G.

Member Quote:

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*HIV Negative or  
Positive You Decide  
"We must transfer  
responsibility to the  
individual; AIDS  
prevention is  
everyone's business."*

Esther B. Tellechea,  
Executive Director,  
Hispanic AIDS  
Awareness  
Program.



# FLAAG RECOMMENDATIONS and the NATIONAL HIV/AIDS STRATEGY

F.L.A.A.G.

Member Quote:

*“While Latinos play an integral role in achieving the goals and vision of the NHAS, all of us must strive to create a clear sense of direction; create and share innovative strategies; create and engage in collaborative partnerships to significantly decrease the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in all communities”.*

Evelyn Ullah, Director, STD/HIV/AIDS Prevention Program, Broward County Health Department and NLAAN (National Latino AIDS Action Network) Leadership Committee, Region 4 Representative Research and Data Workgroup Chair.

## GOAL NUMBER 1:

### Reduce the number of Latinos who become infected with HIV.

Despite the efforts of Florida and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prevent HIV/AIDS among Hispanics/Latinos, much more needs to be done by policy makers, health providers, community leaders and elected officials. The Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS **must** increase their efforts in providing HIV prevention services to Hispanic/Latino populations.

The NHAS’ goal of reducing new HIV infection by 25% by 2015 is an achievable goal. With the promising advent of microbicides and treating HIV-infected individuals with antiretroviral medications proven to significantly reduce transmission to partners, the future looks promising in reducing new HIV infections in Florida and across the country.

1. Replicate **TEST** Miami and **TEST** Broward initiative statewide to the most impacted areas. We suggest this effort to be called **TEST Florida**.

#### INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

- Routine HIV testing in all health-care settings.
  - Encourage individuals to know their HIV status and seek treatment if needed.
  - Eliminate perinatal transmission.
  - Educate providers in the community regarding prevention and treatment efforts.
2. Expand **Expanded Testing Initiative** (ETI) to Latino community-based organizations statewide to the most impacted areas.
  3. Promote “juntoshacemoselcambio.com” and 1-800-545-SIDA in all Spanish prevention and testing campaigns/efforts.
  4. Develop a statewide testing campaign promoting HIV, STDs, Viral Hepatitis, and TB in a more holistic approach to health.
    - For example, county health department clinics; funded community based organizations and/or private health care settings should recommend suggest their patients include in their routine labs HIV/STD/TB testing regardless of their risk.
  5. Reinvigorate HIV prevention efforts and strategies for Latino gay men/ MSM, and mobilize Latino MSM leaders to support the reduction of risky behavior.
  6. Develop HIV prevention messages that are positive and mitigate stigma, racism and homophobia.
  7. Develop prevention messages that support self-esteem.
  8. Develop separate and specific messages targeting Latino gay and bisexual men and men who have sex with men, but do not identify as gay or bisexual.
  9. Recommend school based HIV education in schools (grades K-12).



**GOAL NUMBER 2:**

**Increase Access to Care and Improving Health Outcomes for Latinos Living with HIV.**

The improved treatments available for people living with HIV/AIDS can only benefit people who enter and remain in HIV related primary care. Cost will continue to be a barrier to care for some HIV positive individuals because of the expense of many HIV treatments. In addition to cost, Florida’s under-funded AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) poses a huge barrier to care for persons living with HIV/AIDS in Florida. With Florida’s ADAP waiting list growing each and every day, and Latinos having one of the highest uninsured rates in the state, Florida’s leaders must settle the ADAP problem immediately. If the ADAP crisis is not resolved soon, it will have an enormous burden on Latinos because many of us do not have a regular doctor or source of preventive care.

1. Explore the feasibility of partnership with private pharmacies (such as; Walgreens, CVS, Wal-Mart, K-Mart, Target) to distribute HIV medications to ADAP eligible patients to increase adherence and reduces barriers and stigma. Ensure materials are developed in Spanish that clearly describe ADAP and eligibility processes.
2. Promote a safe environment that is clearly defined as “not associated with immigration.”
3. Identify brochures and educational materials that can help the Latino community access care.
4. Identify clinics and CBO’s that are Latino-friendly and understand the Latino community.
5. Increase testing within the Latino communities, including linkage to care specialists.
6. Promote awareness efforts and create an emphasis on chronic late testing/late diagnosis among Latinos.
7. Increase cultural competency of professional and para-professional staff that provide primary care services to Hispanic persons living with HIV/AIDS.
8. Establish a seamless system to immediately link people to continuous and coordinated quality care when they are diagnosed with HIV.
9. Take deliberate steps to increase the number and diversity of available providers of clinical care and related services for people living with HIV.
10. Enhance Florida’s partner notification services in order to link HIV-positive people to care.

F.L.A.A.G.

Member Quote:

*“Only working together can we effectively fight the HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination in the multicultural Latino communities.*

*I believe unity creates the strength needed to make a difference”.*

Jorge Gardela, Health Outreach Director, Pride Center Florida / Area 10 Latinos en Accion Chair.



**F.L.A.A.G. RECOMMENDATIONS and the NATIONAL HIV/AIDS STRATEGY (CONTINUED)**

F.L.A.A.G.  
Member Quote:

*“As human our nature is to fear what we don’t know, that’s why I am inviting you to get tested, get the facts and don’t live anymore in the dark, with fear...”* Yelitza Zubr, Intervention Specialist, Bureau of HIV/AIDS Prevention Section.

**GOAL NUMBER 3:  
Reduce HIV-Related Health Disparities**

An increased focus should be placed on prevention programs that include both individual/population strategies and that engage Latino communities in addressing behavioral changes in order to reduce HIV related health disparities.

1. Continue to fund successful strategies such as *L.U.C.E.S. (Latinas Unidas Contra El SIDA)* to reduce disparities among women and men.
  - Explore the possibility of a LUCES facebook page or link under statewide website.
  - Reprint LUCES Words of Wisdom booklet/cards.
2. Partner with a national Latino faith-based organization(s) to promote HIV prevention and care in Florida Latino churches and faith-based organizations statewide.
3. Increase or establish contracts with Latino Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning (LGTBQ) organizations to implement new and innovative approaches that target the Latino LGTBQ community in the following areas: Pinellas, Hillsborough, Polk, Orange, Lee, Palm Beach, Broward, Miami-Dade, Monroe and St. Lucie Counties.
4. Expand Business and Labor Responds to AIDS Project within the Latino communities statewide.
  - Business Responds to AIDS/ Labor Responds to AIDS (BRTA/LRTA) supports and advances the mission of the CDC’s domestic HIV prevention goals by encouraging and supporting private sector education, initiatives, leadership, and health promotions activities.
5. Expand *A.M.O.R. (LOVE) Arriba Mujer con Orgullo y Respeto (Stand up women with Pride and Respect)* to all rural areas statewide.
  - AMOR is a Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS statewide intervention that will be piloted in the Florida panhandle to address HIV/STDs among rural/migrant Hispanic women and their partners.
6. Develop a series of short workshop/trainings geared to the private sector. Secure management’s buy-in of the project.



**F.L.A.A.G. RECOMMENDATIONS and the NATIONAL HIV/AIDS STRATEGY** (CONTINUED)

7. To ensure or offer Spanish or Latino focused evidence-based interventions (EBIs) training to regions where Latinos are one of the priority populations. Examples;
  - Promote DEBI “Cuidate” in Central and Northern parts of the state or other prevention for positive training in Spanish.
  - Promote MACVIH more across the state as it has been effective in reaching Hispanic women.
  - Expand the capacity building assistance (CBA) providers through CDC to assist with trainings, workshops, and strategic planning.
8. Promote a comprehensive approach to HIV prevention programs targeting Latino MSM:
  - Consider prevention measures in the context of the lives of Latino gay men/MSM, cultural diversities and societal challenges. Prevention should include community, structural, individual- and group-level interventions, as well as outreach strategies that work together in addressing co-factors that put MSM at risk. Involve the private sector in these efforts.
9. Address issues related to discrimination, homophobia, stigma and denial:
  - Develop strategies to educate local leaders about the impact of HIV/AIDS on Latino gay men/MSM and how stigma and homophobia fuel the epidemic. Keep HIV/AIDS in the minds of the general public to create a climate of acceptability and to normalize HIV prevention, testing and treatment. Encourage HIV prevention and health care providers who work with MSM to consider diversity training.

F.L.A.A.G.  
Member Quote:

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*“I’m looking forward to the day when calling someone gay is no longer an insult. Stand against stigma...end bullying and homophobia.”*

Sandra Estévez,  
Statewide Latino AIDS  
Coordinator.



## CONCLUSION

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F.L.A.A.G.  
Member Quote:

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*“I am so proud of the hard work done by F.L.A.A.G. to align our important efforts among Hispanics with the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. We look forward to our continued partnership to achieve these goals.”* Marlene

LaLota, Florida HIV  
Prevention Director.

These recommendations should be used by the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS, the Florida Latino AIDS Advisory Group and community partners to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic among Hispanics/Latinos in Florida. The development of new, creative, and effective HIV prevention, outreach, and care strategies that meet Latino-specific needs are crucial to curbing the spread of HIV. Eradicating the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS through targeted intervention, early access to testing and treatment, and improving knowledge and methods of preventing the spread of HIV through outreach and education are essential steps in Florida’s battle against HIV/AIDS among Latinos.



TEST and TREAT  
LATINO HIV/AIDS  
in FLORIDA



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