Women and HIV/Hepatitis C Fact Sheet

The extremely high rates of HIV and Hepatitis C among women incarcerated in New York State necessitates heightened attention from correctional administrators, elected officials, service providers and community advocates.

HIV/AIDS

- Experiences that lead to women’s incarceration – sexwork, drug abuse, poverty, and physical, emotional, and sexual victimization – are also behaviors that put women at risk for HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV) infection. An important indicator of HIV risk for women is a history of trauma associated with poverty and sexual abuse; such histories are pervasive among women incarcerated in New York State.

- New York State has the largest number of inmates living with HIV – approximately 5,000 people in 2003. It also has the largest number of HIV-positive women inmates of all prison systems in the United States – approximately 430 in 2003.

- As the rates of HIV are disproportionately high among African-American and Latina women in the general public, HIV disproportionately impacts women inmates of color.

- 14.6% of women in New York State prisons are HIV positive compared to 7.3% of male inmates. The rate of infection among New York’s women inmates is about 50 times higher than the rate in the general public.

- A 1999 New York City Department of Health sero-prevalence study found that 18% of women entering New York City jails were living with HIV compared to 7.6% of men.

Hepatitis C

- HCV is a viral disease that attacks the liver. People infected with HIV are often co-infected with HCV: approximately 30% of all people living with HIV are co-infected with HCV. Effective HIV prevention must also include a focus on HCV.

- Of the 5,000 inmates estimated to be HIV positive in New York State correctional facilities, 759 are known to be co-infected with HCV. People who are co-infected with HIV and HCV sometimes experience an accelerated progression of HCV.

- The HCV rate is higher among incarcerated women in New York State than among incarcerated men. A sero-prevalence study of 4,000 New York State inmates conducted by the State Department of Correctional Services in 2000 found that 23% of female inmates and 13.6% of male inmates were infected with HCV.

- HCV is especially prevalent among women incarcerated for crimes related to sexwork and drug addiction.

- Because HIV and HCV have shared routes of infection (blood), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Infectious Disease Society of America recommend screening all people living with HIV for HCV.


See note 4.

Rate of HIV infection in the U.S. general public estimated to be .32%. Figure derived from, “Annual Estimates of the Population for the United States and States, and for Puerto Rico: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2005,” U.S. Census Bureau (2005) and “HIV Infection and AIDS: An Overview,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) (March 2005).


Courtney E. Colton, *Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and HIV Co-Infection in Corrections: Where Do We Stand?*, Infectious Diseases in Corrections Report (ICDR), Vol. 8, Issue 10 (October 2005).

New York State Department of Correctional Services Response to Document Request of the Assembly Committee on Correction and Committee Health (December 30, 2003).

