

Hispanic Health Council Reports AIDS Survey Results

by Don Rully

The AIDS epidemic has tragically affected the homosexual community, and has spread to IV drug users. Now, a recent report suggests that youth in Hartford are at significant risk of contracting the deadly virus.

The report issued by the Hispanic Health Council on Thursday, Sept. 26 said that 1/3 of teens with a single partner consistently use condoms. But the report also offered a glimmer of hope as far as showing one-third of the teens being open to learn more about AIDS.

The Health Council report is the result of a survey done with 246 teens in Hartford in 1995 by a consortium of providers which have formed the YOUTH Project, an AIDS prevention program targeting teens.

Partners in the YOUTH Project include the Health Council, AIDS Project Hartford, Greater Hartford HIV Action Initiative, Hartford Gay and Lesbian Health Collective, Latinos/As Contra Sida, Planned Parenthood, Urban League of Greater Hartford, and the Connecticut Department of Education.

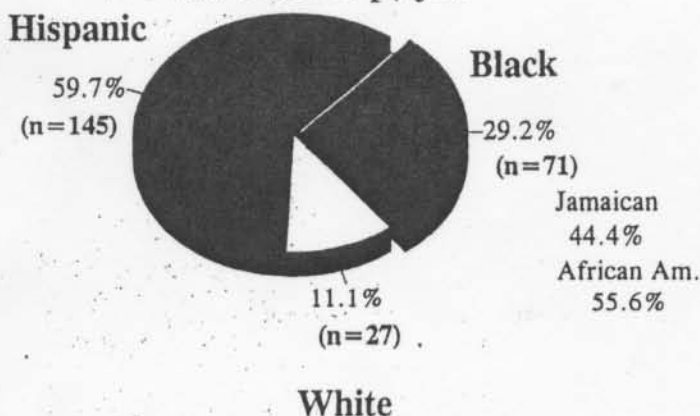
Forty-Four percent of teens feel they are knowledgeable about AIDS, and of that group 73 percent still worry about getting AIDS, 83 percent feel AIDS is an important concern, and 75 percent want to learn more about AIDS.

"They know they are getting information but feeling there is something more out there that they're not getting," said Sheryl Horowitz, anthropologist with the Health Council.

When tested for knowledge about AIDS, the group who believed themselves knowledgeable, answered almost 30 percent of the questions posed to them incorrectly.

In addition, the report stated, almost 45 percent of those claiming to be sexually active with multiple partners of the opposite sex do not regularly use condoms, and 14.1 percent of the sexually active teens with multiple partners never use con-

Demographics of sample The YOUTH project



traception.

Just under 33 percent were found to use condoms while having sex with a single partner.

The report was issued at a press conference at the Hispanic Health Council before about 35 people.

For many of the survey questions regarding sexual habits up to 35 percent and slightly above answered abstinence.

"Any adult who has any responsibility for young people has to worry about sex, drugs, AIDS, and violence," said Rolando Martinez, Executive Director of the Health Council.

Of the teens sampled it was found that 47.3 percent had relatives or friends with HIV/AIDS. Drugs and alcohol played a role in the lives of 39.4 percent of the teens canvassed, which was broken into 35 percent of younger teens 12-15 years who drink or use drugs.

Forty eight percent of all males, 52 percent of Hispanic males, 57 percent of teens who live on their own, 70 percent of teens not in school, and 89 percent of gang members drink or use drugs.

The Hartford teen population appears to be fairly ignorant or naive about the dangers of sex but nevertheless, a segment wants to learn more about safety.

Sexually active teens were 63.5 percent, while 56 percent of males were found to have had

multiple partners. One quarter of all teens 12-15 surveyed have had multiple partners.

The report stated that older teens are more likely to be sexually active than younger teens, but less likely to use condoms consistently.

It was also found that only 16 percent of teens found out about HIV from reliable sources like an AIDS group, Dr./Nurse or School.

A basic distrust against condom protection was found through information that 67.2 percent of teens do not trust condoms, and don't believe condoms protect against AIDS. But of this group, 80 percent still think protection against AIDS exposure is still possible.

"If it's not condoms doing the protection, what is it, it's not abstinence," said Horowitz.

Fifty-seven percent of all teens, and 83 percent of young black teens, surveyed said everyone infected with AIDS had visible symptoms. Twenty-eight percent of all teens surveyed said an HIV test protects a person from infection, while 80 percent of all teens surveyed said AIDS is spread through saliva, and 65 percent of all teens, said a person can contract AIDS by donating blood.

Overall, for a great majority of teens surveyed, sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy were deemed as more important concerns than AIDS.