

### You can live well with HIV

SAYFSM services will help you find direction and hope.

These programs and services are available for you at SAYFSM:

- Emotional and spiritual support group for Africans living with HIV
- HIV counseling and testing
- HIV/AIDS prevention education
- Prevention intervention and health education for HIV positives
- Culturally and linguistically sensitive educational materials
- Medical case management
- Care advocacy
- Mental Health Counseling
- Resources and referral for housing, employment, public assistance, food shelf, clothing, schooling, legal, household items, and other needs.

### Get Tested!

All testing and related services are free and available at the SAYFSM office.

SAYFSM tests blood using standard rapid HIV test kit/Oraquick kit that is performed by well-trained and certified staff members.



Call SAYFSM and talk to a staff member to schedule an appointment.

Test results in about 15 minutes.

### Our address:

SAYFSM  
2395 University Avenue, #200,  
St. Paul, MN 55114

Telephone No.: (651) 644-3983

E-mail: [info@sayfsm.org](mailto:info@sayfsm.org)

Website: [www.sayfsm.org](http://www.sayfsm.org)

### DONATIONS GLADLY ACCEPTED!

Yes! I would like to contribute to SAYFSM:  
 \$25    \$10    \$5    other

Please send your donation to:

SAYFSM  
2395 University Avenue W, #200  
St. Paul, MN 55114

Thank You!!

### FREE HIV Testing Sites

SAYFSM----- 651-644-3983

JustUS Health ----- 612-341-2060

Red Door----- 612-543-5555

Providing culturally appropriate services



Sub-Saharan African Youth & Family Services in Minnesota (SAYFSM) provides culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate HIV/AIDS education and social services to all Africans in Minnesota.



# Mbiu



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651-644-3983

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## Living Well with HIV: Sharing my personal experience



I was born and raised in an East African country. I left my country during my childhood in 1979 and fled and sought protection in France in 1981. I was diagnosed HIV Positive in 1989 when I visited for a routine medical checkup in a port city in southern France. I felt that I had no chance of living. At that time, I thought that an HIV-positive person couldn't live more than five years. So, I felt that my days

numbered and left with no prospect of living any longer. But I had decided to make the best of whatever time I had left. Accordingly, I tried to avoid anxiety and frustration and live a short but happy life. I decided to face reality and prepared myself for any eventualities. Fortunately, I am still kicking and have managed to live well beyond my marked five years.

Since I have lived in a western country where people mind their own business and care less about other individual personal matters, I have not experienced significant stigma and discrimination due to my HIV/AIDS status. On top of this, I have had supportive family and friends who have continued to stand by my side during high and low points in my life. I owe gratitude to them and the physicians who have cared for me medically and psychologically.

I visited the USA on and off on several occasions since 2009 to pay a visit to my mother who has been living in Minnesota. During those visits, I would look on the internet for an organization working on helping and providing support services for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) particularly African immigrant communities. I came across Sub-Saharan African Youth and Family Services in Minnesota (SAYFSM) during such internet browsing. I visited the SAYFSM office with my friend and became a client in 2014 when I have finally immigrated and started living in Minnesota. I am highly indebted to the SAYFSM support group and staff. They have helped me to share my experience and platform with my fellow PLWHA. They have provided us with mental health and other psychosocial services which have been helpful for me in leading a better and positive life.

Since I have come from southern France with moderate weather conditions, I have a hard time acclimatizing to Minnesota winter. I miss my friends and colleagues in France and sometimes suffer from homesickness. But I am happy to join and live with my mother. The availability and accessibility of good-paying jobs have compensated for what I missed from leaving France.

As soon as I learned my HIV/AIDS is to scale down some of my risky lifestyles and consumption of alcohol and smoking cigarettes. Doing so has helped me enormously in avoiding health problems emanating from HIV/AIDS

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infection. Besides, I have changed my diet. I have started eating fresh vegetables and fruits. I have also begun doing regular physical exercise. On top of these, I have regularly and constantly taken my medication as per my doctor's

order. The key to living a healthy life for PLWHA is to have a positive outlook and good prospects of life. It's also helpful to keep oneself busy with work and social life.

The message I have for my fellow PLWA is to avoid frustration and depression and live a stress-free life. I have also a message for youth: They should minimize or avoid risky behaviors that would expose them to HIV/AIDS such as unsafe sex, injecting drugs, and heavy alcohol consumption. They should protect themselves from both HIV/AIDS and Covid-19. They should practice social distancing and masking up to protect themselves from Covid-19.



### Let's Fight HIV - not those living with HIV

People don't want to know if they have HIV, because they are afraid their family and community will judge and reject them. Everyone needs to know they will always be loved and supported even if they have HIV/AIDS.

The virus that causes AIDS is not spread through touch, saliva, tears, sneezing, coughing, or any type of casual contact. HIV is spread mainly through exposure to semen, vaginal fluid, anal fluid, blood, or breast milk from a person who is HIV positive.

## How do you know if you have HIV?

Testing is the only way to know for certain if you have HIV. Most people who are HIV positive won't have any symptoms for several years after being infected. So, you can't know if you have HIV by the way you feel. Testing is the only way to know for sure.

It is a good idea to get tested, if you've had unprotected sex or if your partner has tested positive for HIV. You should also get tested if you've shared needles with anybody (including needles used for drugs, piercings, and tattoos).

If you are HIV positive, it's good to know so you can start taking medicines that can help you stay healthy and reduce your chances of spreading HIV to others.

Finding out you have HIV may be scary and difficult to deal with. SAYFSM staff can answer your questions and address your concerns. Before you get the test, SAYFSM staff will help you understand what a negative or a positive test result could mean for you. If your test result is positive, it will be important for your wellbeing to have the support of people you know you can trust. SAYFSM offers a free emotional support group, a safe place where you can talk with people who know what you are going through, as well as counseling service and help with basic needs.

### If you have HIV/AIDS, you can contact SAYFSM for these free services

- help with housing, furniture, household items, food, clothing, employment;
- referrals to clinics, mental health providers, legal services, ESL classes;
- translation and interpreting assistance; and
- transportation to medical appointments.

*SAYFSM services are free, confidential, and nonjudgmental.  
We serve all Africans regardless of country of origin, culture, language, and religion.*

