

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
Website: 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

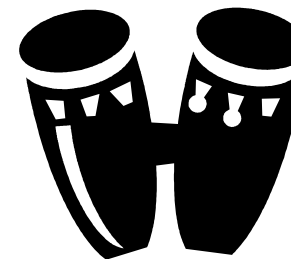
FREE HIV Testing Sites

- 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.



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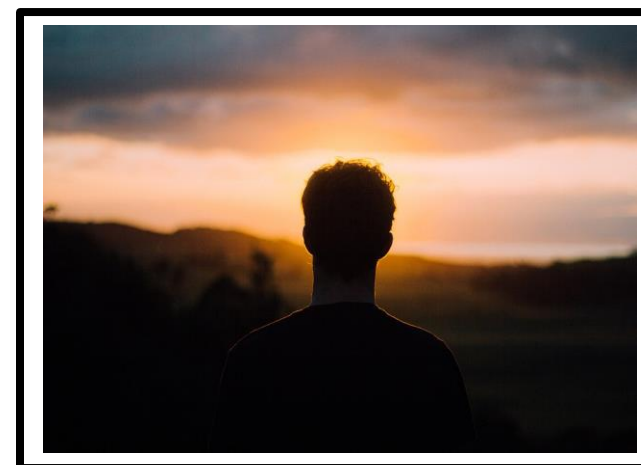
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STIGMA Keeps Me Faceless and Nameless



Physicians took my blood sample to arrange surgery procedure. In the meantime, they found out that there was HIV in my blood. My initial reaction was shock. Disbelief. I feared that I would die soon.

At that time, I did not have much information and education about HIV/AIDS. I bought into the unfounded rumors that were hovering around that a person infected with HIV could be dead then and there.

My name is Lasanna (not my real name). I was born and raised in Guinea located in West Africa. I moved to the USA in 2007 and sought asylum for fear of political persecution in Guinea should I return amid surging violence raging then in Guinea. Thankfully, I have been granted asylum having gone through long years of trial and tribulation waiting for approval.

In 2013, I visited the hospital for what initially appeared to be brain tumor surgery.

Fortunately, my family does have some clue about medical issues. That somewhat eased my worry. Hence, I did not experience significant stigma or isolation. But community perception was rough; so much so, that I have been forced to hide my status. That is why I am telling my story under a made-up name. My community (Western African communities in Minnesota) has not had enough information and education about HIV/AIDS. Stigma and isolation are still commonplace among my community.

With the help and assistance of my daughter, I started receiving medical treatment at my primary clinic. I have kept the practice of following constant care and treatment. My doctor's moral encouragement and upliftment above and beyond anything else restored my hope and dream to navigate life and have a positive outlook.

I know SAYFSM and used to visit their office, since my friend worked in their office. But I never thought I would be their client one day. SAYFSM staff supported and smoothed my admission to their support group in 2014. I would say that SAYFSM has helped me in regaining emotional wellbeing. Their support and care have been exceptionally phenomenal. They have created an atmosphere of family environment among participants of the support group. They helped me in navigating and make use of state and county resources that were useful for me to improve my emotional and physical health.

I would advise readers that the key to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and mitigating stigma is obtaining reliable information. I would highly emphasize that folks should get HIV/AIDS-related information from CDC, MDH, and local health agencies. I also encourage people to do HIV testing to know their status and practice preventive and protective measures. Specifically, I would like to call upon folks to use a condom and limit sexual partners.

“HIV/AIDS should not hold you back from living in happiness and enjoying a bounty of life and love.”

As a person living with HIV/AIDS, I want to speak directly to my fellow people living with HIV/AIDS and tell you that the virus does not define you. Your HIV/AIDS should not hold you back from living in happiness and enjoying a bounty of life and love. Avoid worrying about HIV/AIDS. Stress does not help but hurt you. I can tell you from experience that constantly thinking about HIV/AIDS severely affects you more than the virus could do. Instead, try your best in pursuing your passion and desire to make the world a better place by working hard and having joy.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of following medical treatment. I can speak from my experience, following and adhering to the advice of health workers is essential in improving one's health. I also want to stress that it is incredibly helpful to strictly follow a proper HIV/AIDS treatment medical regimen. I hope and dream that you stay healthy and safe in this rather tumultuous period imposed upon us by the COVID-19 pandemic. I also advise you to practice and follow recommendations provided by public health professionals to prevent the spread of 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.



What is HIV stigma?

HIV stigma is negative attitudes and beliefs about people with HIV. It is the prejudice that comes with labeling an individual as part of a group that is believed to be socially unacceptable.

Here are a few examples:

- Believing that only certain groups of people can get HIV
- Making moral judgments about people who take steps to prevent HIV transmission
- Feeling that people deserve to get HIV because of their choices

What is discrimination?

While stigma refers to an attitude or belief, discrimination is the behaviors that result from those attitudes or beliefs. HIV discrimination is the act of treating people living with HIV differently than those without HIV.

Here are a few examples:

- Refusing casual contact with someone living with HIV
- Socially isolating a member of a community because they are HIV positive

What are the effects of HIV stigma and discrimination?

- HIV stigma and discrimination affect the emotional well-being and mental health of people living with HIV. People living with HIV often internalize the stigma they experience and begin to develop a negative self-image. They may fear they will be discriminated against or judged negatively if their HIV status is revealed.
- “Internalized stigma” or “self-stigma” happens when a person takes in the negative ideas and stereotypes about people living with HIV and start to apply them to themselves. HIV internalized stigma can lead to feelings of shame, fear of disclosure, isolation, and despair. These feelings can keep people from getting tested and treated for HIV.

We can all help end HIV stigma through our words and actions in our everyday lives. Lead others with your supportive behaviors.

Excerpted from the CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention