

Were

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

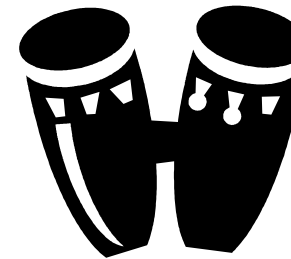
FREE HIV Testing Sites

- SAYFSM ----- 651-644-3983
- JustUS Health ----- 612-341-2060
- Red Door ----- 612-543-5555

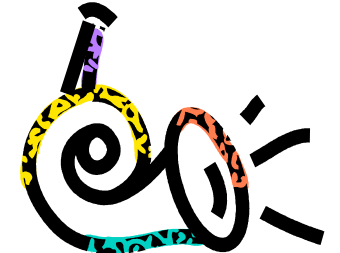


Sub-Saharan African Youth & Family Services in Minnesota (SAYFSM) provides culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate HIV/AIDS education and social services to all Africans in Minnesota.

Providing culturally appropriate services



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New Peace and Freedom Beyond Stigma



country, and I wanted to protect my baby from HIV/AIDS.

When I was told that I had HIV in my blood, I could not believe what I was told. At that time, it was broadly assumed that a person who had HIV was frail, skinny, and pale. I had none of those symptoms. I started looking for where HIV had been hidden in my body. I searched everywhere on my body to no avail.

I was born and raised in East Africa. My name is Hagere Atnafu and I am in my thirties. I became aware of my HIV/AIDS status during a pregnancy check back in September 2001. I decided to get tested for HIV/AIDS because I suspected my husband could have HIV, due to his job that involves frequent traveling to various parts of the

After learning about my HIV status, I asked my husband to get tested. But he adamantly rejected talking about HIV testing, let alone getting tested. Even if I tried to convince him by providing compelling and tangible reasons to get tested, he would not change his mind. Instead, he abandoned me and arranged to marry another wife. I had to look after my baby girl on my own.

Having realized the dearth of HIV/AIDS awareness and education in my community, I took the initiative to teach about the prevention and transmission of HIV/AIDS in and around the church, university, and community facilities. After a while, a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) asked me to join and work with them on raising awareness and dispelling misconceptions and stigma on HIV/AIDS and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWA). It was a promising activity until I encountered deep personal discrimination and isolation. A family member of my landlord saw me while I was teaching a university student about HIV/AIDS and informed his family to evict me from their house. I was thrown out of my rented house and became homeless.

I could not put into words the trial and tribulation I went through to raise my child while leading a homeless life. I reached out to close members of my family, including my mother, and asked them to foster my child. Due to stigma and entrenched misunderstanding on HIV/AIDS, I could not find any person in my family who would help me in fostering my child. Having run out of options, I decided to give my child to an adoption agency. Since I could not survive stigma and discrimination in rural provinces, I left for the capital city hoping to have a better life.

In the capital city, I started teaching about HIV/AIDS in church and on media. I regularly appeared on national radio and local TV channels to teach and share experiences of living with HIV/AIDS. Besides, I started organizing people to contribute a donation to help PLWA who were sheltered at church. But church leaders were not happy with my resource mobilization activism and prohibited me from meeting with PLWA sheltered at the church. Since I was discouraged and demoralized to live and work among my community, I contemplated fleeing the country and living abroad in peace and freedom.

In 2012, I made an arduous journey to reach Saudi Arabia. On the route to Saudi Arabia via Yemen, I was gang-raped by six traffickers. I arrived in Saudi Arabia exhausted and traumatized. I gave myself in to the police to be deported back to my country. After I returned to my country, I fled to a neighboring country to join refugees and seek resettlement in a western country where I could lead my life without being haunted by the specter of stigma and discrimination. Luckily, after I spent two years in a refugee camp, I was admitted to resettlement in the United States. I came to the USA in 2019 as a refugee and have lived in Minnesota ever since.

I have had a rough time adapting to America due to the language barrier and flashbacks from past trauma. Now I have managed to get a house and a job. Since I came to America, I regularly visit my doctors and attend psychiatrist appointments to get medical and psychological support that help a lot. I joined SAYFSM in July 2021. I am grateful to SAYFSM for providing me with much-needed caring and psycho-social support.

DO NOT segregate yourselves; but come out of the shadow and lead the life you desire.

I call up the youth to protect themselves and their loved ones from HIV/AIDS by, if possible, abstaining from sex or using a condom. Since drug addiction could lead to unsafe sexual intercourse, I urge my young generation to avoid drug addiction. Moreover, I say this to people living with HIV/AIDS: **DO NOT segregate yourselves; but come out of the shadow and lead the life you desire.** Furthermore, I call on my families to discuss and closely supervise their young family members regarding health and wellness.

The author of this story wishes to remain anonymous. Hagere Atnafu is not the author's real name.

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 will 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 and counseling services, as well as 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.

