



National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS)

In 2002, the State of New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), Division of HIV/AIDS Services (DHAS) received federal funding from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop and implement a surveillance system to monitor selected behaviors and access to prevention services among groups at highest risk for HIV infection. The system is known as the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance System (NHBS) and the targeted populations are identified as men who have sex with men (MSM), injection drug users (IDU) and heterosexuals at risk of HIV infection (HET).

The selection for participation in the NHBS is based on local HIV prevalence rate and covers national geographic areas most impacted by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. New Jersey is one of 25 national sites participating in the NHBS. It is conducted in the Newark primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA) through a contract with the New Jersey Community Research Initiative (NJCRI). The NHBS is marketed in New Jersey with the name "NJREACT," an acronym for Risk, Evaluation, Access to Care and Treatment.

NHBS activities are implemented in rounds; each round is composed of three cycles of data collection that rotate annually among MSM, IDU and HET. These cycles are repeated overtime in subsequent rounds such that data are collected from each risk group every three years. Round 1 closed December 2007. Round 2, Cycle 1 begins January 2008 with data collection among MSM; Cycles 2 and 3 are expected to take place in 2009 and 2010, with data collection among IDU and HET, respectively. During each cycle an attempt is made to recruit 500 anonymous participants; participants receive incentives for their enrollment in the study. All recruits are asked to complete a behavioral survey and HIV test. The survey covers areas including demographics, sexual behaviors, alcohol and drug use history, HIV testing experiences, history of incarcerations, health conditions and assessment of prevention activities.

Findings from the NHBS can be used to enhance understanding of risk and testing behaviors, and to develop and evaluate HIV prevention programs that provide services to these groups. At the individual level, the NHBS participants benefit from HIV prevention counseling, learning their HIV status, and referrals for additional information and care for HIV-related risks.

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