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Epidemiological Profiles

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Before planning any PwP program, it is key to learn about the persons with HIV in the community and their HIV risks. An epidemiological profile may include:

- ▶ Demographics of the persons with HIV in the community, including breakdown by gender, race, ethnicity and age
- ▶ Source of HIV transmission (IDU, heterosexual, MSM)
- ▶ Geographical distribution of cases
- ▶ Highest risk for transmitting HIV
- ▶ Other relevant data (STD rates, hepatitis rates, etc.)

So, where to look? Almost every county and jurisdiction has some kind of HIV surveillance data collected and analyzed. Following are agencies that collect HIV epidemiological data:

- ▶ **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS.** Through a community planning process, California local health jurisdictions (LHJ) have developed epidemiological profiles for their local area. To find this information, contact the LHJ or the co-chairs of the planning process listed on the HIV Info web site www.hivinfo.org/cac/communication/localhealth.shtml, or call the California AIDS Clearinghouse at 888/611-4222 (toll free in California).
- ▶ **STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT.** The California Department of Health Services, Office of AIDS has epi profiles: www.dhs.ca.gov/AIDS or 916/445-0553.

The quality and usefulness of epidemiological data collected can vary greatly from area to area. Some HIV profiles may only include persons with AIDS and not persons with HIV. To enhance HIV data, you can use data on STDs, drug use, hepatitis, etc.

- ▶ **THE CALIFORNIA STD CONTROL BRANCH** offers STD profiles by LHJ: www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/std/stdatasummaries.htm

▶ **NATIONAL CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS AND FASTATS** features statistics on HIV, drug use, etc. www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats

An epidemiological profile is just the beginning of program planning. The next step is to get to know the persons with HIV in your area to better understand their specific prevention needs. The following chapter gives an overview of this kind of formative research.