



Raising the Volume of Young African-American Voices in the Fight against HIV

"i know" is a new CDC-sponsored social media effort designed to encourage young African-Americans aged 18 to 24 to talk openly and often about HIV, both online and off. *"i know"* features a video and radio public service announcement (PSA) starring actor Jamie Foxx, as well as video messages from supporting celebrities and advocates, including recording artist Ludacris and HIV advocate Marvelyn Brown. The effort uses Facebook, Twitter, a new Web site, and text messages to disseminate the facts about HIV widely and promote dialogue about the disease among this hard-hit population.

By supporting frank conversations through social media, *"i know"* creates an opportunity for young people to talk directly with each other about how to prevent HIV and about the tough issues that fuel the spread of this disease. It also gives them the tools to stay safe, stay informed, and become part of the solution. *"i know"* is part of CDC's *Act Against AIDS*, a national communication campaign launched last year by the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services, to combat complacency about the HIV/AIDS crisis in the United States and raise awareness of HIV among communities at risk, including African-American communities.

Silence Despite the Crisis

Young African-Americans are one of the groups hardest hit by HIV. While African-Americans represent just 14 percent of people aged 13 to 29 in the United States, they account for half of all new infections in this age group.^{1,2} Young black gay and bisexual men are especially affected, representing more than half (55 percent) of new infections among African-Americans in this age group.²

Despite the stark statistics, concern about HIV is declining. A recent survey from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that between 1997 and 2009, the number of African-Americans aged 18 to 29 who reported being "very concerned" about becoming infected with HIV declined from 54 percent to 40 percent.³

"i know" is part of CDC's commitment to addressing the silence around HIV and reaching youth with the information they need to protect themselves.

The Power of Dialogue

Research indicates that the simple act of talking about HIV can help change the course of the epidemic — by reducing stigma, increasing knowledge about HIV prevention, and motivating life-saving behaviors.⁴ *"i know"* is designed to encourage dialogue about HIV among African-American young people, focusing on HIV testing, condom use and other prevention strategies, facts about HIV transmission, and ways to reduce the stigma of HIV.

Because more and more conversations among young people are occurring on mobile phones and online, *"i know"* utilizes text messaging and some of the most popular social media sites — including Facebook and Twitter — to invite African-American youth to take charge of the conversation about HIV. Research shows that young African-Americans are among the fastest-growing users of social media networks.⁵ Through regular status updates, tweets, text messages and celebrity video messages, *"i know"* allows young people to get the facts about HIV, share this critical information with their peers, and connect with celebrities and other young people involved in the fight against HIV.



“i know” Components



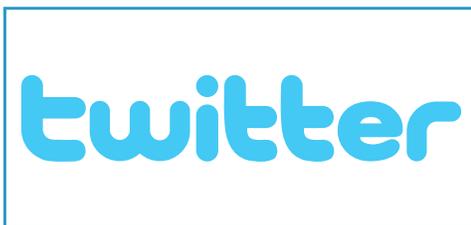
Celebrity PSAs — An online video and radio public service announcement by Jamie Foxx calls on viewers to break the silence surrounding HIV and get involved in “i know” by speaking out about HIV.



Web site — The “i know” Web site (www.actagainstaids.org) allows visitors to test their knowledge about HIV, learn about HIV prevention, identify nearby HIV testing sites, view the latest “i know” videos, and join the campaign’s social media networks.



Facebook — The “i know” Facebook page (www.facebook.com/iknow) allows users to interact with each other and with CDC about HIV. The page will also give them an opportunity to share and respond to the online video PSA and other celebrity video messages. Regular status updates will include questions and news items meant to spur ongoing conversation about HIV.



Twitter — The “i know” Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/iknow_talkhiv) will help spread the word about the initiative and sustain the dialogue about HIV. Regular tweets will pose questions about HIV knowledge and attitudes, and link followers to information on HIV testing and prevention.



Texting — Text messages will alert subscribers to updates about “i know” activities, information about HIV testing, and video messages from celebrities and youth advocates.

References

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau. Public Use Microdata Sample. 2006. Available at: <http://dataferrett.census.gov/>.
- 2 CDC. Subpopulation Estimates from the HIV Incidence Surveillance System — United States, 2006. *MMWR* 2008; 57: 985-989.
- 3 Kaiser Family Foundation. 2009 Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS. Available at: <http://www.kff.org/hivaids/>.
- 4 CDC. Unpublished analysis. 2009.
- 5 Pew Research Center. Wireless Internet Use. 2009. Available at: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/12-Wireless-Internet-Use.aspx>.