

## NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

**PRESS RELEASE**  
September 2018

### **Living with HIV and Mental Health** National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

**(Newark, NJ)** – Mental health at every stage of life (childhood, adolescence and adulthood) is an essential component of overall well-being; equally as important as one’s physical health. Each September, National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, public health advocates highlight the importance of mental health while calling attention to the alarming rates of mental illness in the United States. Millions of Americans including children and teens live with some form of mental illness; major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders among the more common forms.<sup>1</sup>

Although anyone at any age may find themselves struggling with a mental health condition and/or suicidal ideation, some populations are at an even higher risk than the general population. Many factors contribute to increased risk of mental illness, but living with a serious, chronic medical condition like HIV can significantly impact mental and emotional health. People living with HIV often suffer from depression, thereby significantly increasing their risk for suicide.<sup>2</sup>

A 15-year study conducted in England and Wales showed that the suicide rate in HIV-positive men was twice that of the general population, and that this number was even higher in the first year after diagnosis<sup>3</sup>. Many professionals believe this number is so high because of the perceived stigma associated with an HIV diagnosis, and/or because many newly diagnosed patients mistake the signs of major depression as a symptom of HIV infection. Clinical depression is the most commonly observed mental health disorder among those diagnosed with HIV<sup>4</sup>. Remember, mental health conditions are manageable with the help of a mental health professional.

It is important for people living with HIV to make their physical, emotional and mental health a daily priority. If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional distress including thoughts of suicide, get help immediately. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 for crisis care and suicide prevention, 24/7. LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning) youth in crisis or in need of a safe and judgment-free place to talk can call the Trevor Lifeline at 1-866-488-7386.

If you do not know your HIV/STD status, don’t wait – get tested. Anyone sexually active is at risk for getting and spreading STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) including HIV and hepatitis. New Jersey offers free HIV and other STD services to all state residents via the New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline. The hotline’s health professionals are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide free, confidential

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<sup>1</sup> NAMI. [Mental Health Facts in America](#)

<sup>2</sup> AIDSinfo. [HIV and Mental Health](#)

<sup>3</sup> POZ. [British Men With HIV Commit Suicide at Double the National Rate](#)

<sup>4</sup> Psycom. [HIV and Depression](#)

help as well as referrals for counseling and testing/treatment locations. Call 1-800-624-2377, text/email at 8006242377@njpies.org, or chat [www.njhivstdline.org](http://www.njhivstdline.org)

- Referrals for testing sites and other related services
- HIV, STD and hepatitis prevention and treatment information
- Referrals to PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) services
- Counseling and treatment locations
- Emergent housing for HIV-positive individuals
- Syringe Access Program
- Partner notification
- ADDP

For sexual health information, connect with us on Twitter @njhivstdline and Facebook @njhivstdline

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### New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline

Healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses and pharmacists) provide telephone consultation for people seeking information about HIV/AIDS, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and other sexually transmitted diseases including hepatitis. Callers receive information tailored to their needs; discussion about prevention, referrals for testing sites and other related services, counseling and testing locations, and information on treatment and adverse reactions to medications. The hotline is administered by the New Jersey Poison Control Center and funded by the New Jersey Department of Health, Division of HIV, STD, and TB services.

### About Rutgers

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.