

Why Vermont needs the HIV prevention programming Vermont CARES offers:

- Even with advanced treatment and support networks, our services are increasingly necessary each year. HIV is 100% preventable, and there is no cure. Treatment is strong, but only for those with access to health care and self-advocacy for appropriate care and treatment.
- Vermont's largest and longest-serving AIDS Service Organization, we have more than two decades of experience in providing education, outreach, and direct prevention work.
- Communities most at risk of HIV infection in Vermont include gay men (and other men who have sex with men), injection drug users, and heterosexuals at risk through sexual contact. Vermont CARES' programs reach each of these groups with specific programs and in culturally appropriate means. Being homeless, without resources or education, incarcerated, disconnected from family and friends, or mentally ill are additional factors that increase risk of infection.
- Vermont CARES designed and implemented the state's first rapid-result oral HIV testing program. This is a safe, free, strictly regulated, mobile program that tests around 1,000 Vermonters annually.
- A local AND global epidemic, HIV relies on and is spread because of social disinterest, poverty, racism, classism, homophobia, sexism, and substance abuse.
- Each year, an additional 10-20 people in Vermont test positive for HIV infection, through Vermont CARES' testing program or related testing services (Planned Parenthood, private physicians, etc.). The physical, emotional, social, and familial toll for each new infection is lifelong and financially impacts all involved to the tune of up to \$50,000 annually for medication alone.
- Vermont CARES operates one of the only rural needle exchanges in the U.S. Though only 40-50 individuals use this free anonymous service each year, it helps reduce the spread of HIV, hepatitis, and other blood borne pathogens simply by reducing the amount of blood-to-blood contact among people at risk.
- Each year Vermont CARES distributes in our communities, free of charge, thousands of condoms, female condoms, dental dams, sterile injection equipment, and other materials designed to ensure Vermonters have equal access to the tools they need to protect themselves from HIV infection.