

# The Latino Commission on AIDS' Deep South Project

## A Community Mobilization Partnership

**The Latino Commission on AIDS is assessing the current situation with regard to HIV prevention and care services for Latino residents in the southeastern U.S. where a new wave of Latino immigrants has occurred.**

**Background:** Nearly 2 million Hispanics now reside in these seven states (North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Louisiana), many of whom arrived within the last 10 to 15 years. Local service providers in both the government and nonprofit sectors are struggling to build the infrastructure and capacity to respond to the needs of these newcomers, many of whom are vulnerable to health challenges due to the difficult living and working conditions they experience.

Provision of social services of all sorts lags behind this rapid population growth, including services related to HIV prevention and care. The Deep South Program has compiled information about the state of HIV prevention and care services available to these new populations and communities and has worked to bring together local partners at the state level to think strategically about how to improve these services.

HIV/AIDS prevention and care services for Latinos in the Deep South face special challenges due to the lack of community infrastructure and the high percentages of undocumented residents. Due to the transient nature of the population and their avoidance of contact with official entities, reliable and comparable prevalence and incidence statistics are scarce. However, the proportion of Latinos in the total HIV and AIDS diagnosis is rising steadily throughout the region; for example, Latinos comprise over 8 percent of new HIV cases in North Carolina and 10 percent of incident diagnoses in the Metro New Orleans health

region. Service providers in the region consistently report an increase in the numbers of Latino clients they are seeing, and many are convinced that there is a 'hidden epidemic' in the region.

There are many barriers to better services for this population: lack of bilingual staff at agencies; fear and distrust of official institutions; lack of appropriate, sustained prevention education; low literacy and educational levels; high population transience; new restrictive laws limiting access to services for the undocumented; long working hours with few days off; substandard living conditions; and family separation.

Immigrants also face barriers in accessing health care of any kind. They often are reluctant to make contact with government institutions, including health departments. They may be unaware of the risk of HIV infection or experiencing sexual initiation without much orientation on sexual education, HIV prevention information or any type of safe sex guidance. Many are single men cut off from family and friends and with limited English proficiency.

At the same time, the burgeoning immigrant communities are developing important community resources including congregations, grassroots leadership, PTA participation, sport leagues, hiring halls, legal advocates, credit unions, neighborhood associations and other community institutions. Researchers and providers are experimenting with a variety of health promotion models.

The Commission has sponsored a series of statewide strategy roundtables on Latinos and HIV/AIDS in the following states:

- Louisiana, October 11, 2007
- Alabama, February 21, 2008
- Mississippi, April 22, 2008
- South Carolina, June 4, 2008
- Tennessee, June 25, 2008

In addition, the HIV/AIDS program of North Carolina convened a similar meeting to launch its state's Latino HIV/AIDS Initiative on January 23, 2008. Georgia will host a seventh statewide meeting October 7, 2008.

## ALABAMA ..... Demographic and epidemiological facts:

Estimated state population July 1, 2007	4,628,000
Estimated Latino/Hispanic population July 1, 2007	25,000 (2.70%)
Reported HIV/AIDS cases Dec 31, 2007	9,106
Statewide rate (per 100,000)	19.6

### Alabama reported overall and Hispanic HIV incidence, 2005-2007

Year	HIV incidence	Hispanic incidence	H/L as % of total
2005	849	22	2.59%
2006	934	23	2.46%
2007	864	26	3.01%

Source: HIV/AIDS Surveillance Branch, Alabama Department of Public Health, End of the Year Report 2005, <http://www.adph.org/aids>; and Anthony Merriweather, presentation [add].

### Adult and Adolescent Annual AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population, by Race/Ethnicity, Reported in 2006, Alabama

Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic/Latino
4.9	32.5	18.3

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org)

## GEORGIA ..... Demographic and epidemiological facts:

Estimated state population July 1, 2007	9,544,000
Estimated Latino/Hispanic population July 1, 2007	741,000 (7.76%)
Reported HIV/AIDS cases Dec 31, 2007	
Statewide rate (per 100,000)	

### Numbers of HIV (non-AIDS) cases by year of diagnosis and selected characteristics, Georgia (2005-2007)

Year	HIV New Diagnoses	Hisp/Latino incidence	H/L as % of total
2005	1,251	51	4.08%
2006	1,376	69	5.01%
2007	1,338	62	4.63%

Note: Numbers are based on data reported as of June 2008 and are not adjusted for reporting delays.  
Source: Georgia HIV/AIDS Reporting System, 2008 - Georgia Division of Public Health

## LOUISIANA ..... Demographic and epidemiological facts:

Estimated state population July 1, 2007	4,293,000
Estimated Latino/Hispanic population July 1, 2007	137,000 (3.19%)
Reported HIV/AIDS cases Dec 31, 2007	18,797
Statewide rate (per 100,000)	43.8

### Louisiana reported overall and Hispanic HIV incidence, 2005-2007

Year	HIV incidence	Hispanic incidence	H/L as % of total
2005	1001	27	2.70%
2006	1061	36	3.39%
2007	1160	53	4.57%

Source: Louisiana HIV/AIDS Surveillance Quarterly Report, Fourth Quarter 2006, Fourth Quarter 2007, Second Quarter 2008. <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/reports>.

### Metro New Orleans region reported overall and Hispanic HIV incidence, 2005-2007

Year	HIV incidence	Hispanic incidence	H/L as % of total
2005	361	18	4.99%
2006	301	22	7.31%
2007	383	35	9.14%

Source: Louisiana HIV/AIDS Surveillance Quarterly Report, Fourth Quarter 2006, Fourth Quarter 2007, Second Quarter 2008. <http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/reports>.

### Adult and Adolescent Annual AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population, by Race/Ethnicity, Reported in 2006, Louisiana

Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic/Latino
9.5	54.7	17.9

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org)

## MISSISSIPPI ..... Demographic and epidemiological facts:

Estimated state population July 1, 2007	2,919,000
Estimated Latino/Hispanic population July 1, 2007	73,000 (2.50%)
Reported HIV/AIDS cases Dec 31, 2007	8,806
Statewide rate (per 100,000)	21.6

### Mississippi reported overall and Hispanic HIV incidence, 2005-2007

Year	HIV incidence	Hispanic incidence	H/L as % of total
2005	577	32	5.55%
2006	599	37	6.18%
2007	611	19	3.11%

Source: Mississippi Department of Health Office of STD/HIV, personal communication 8/4/2008.

### Adult and Adolescent Annual AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population, by Race/Ethnicity, Reported in 2006, Mississippi

Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic/Latino
4.7	32.3	50.8

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org)

# NORTH CAROLINA

## Demographic and epidemiological facts:

Estimated state population July 1, 2007	9,061,000
Estimated Latino/Hispanic population July 1, 2007	638,000 (7.04%)
Reported HIV/AIDS cases Dec 31, 2007	21,593*
Statewide rate (per 100,000)	23.8*

\*Bill Jones communication, 8/18/2008

### North Carolina reported overall and Hispanic HIV incidence, 2005-2007

Year	HIV incidence	Hispanic incidence	H/L as % of total
2005	1,806	125	6.92%
2006	2,147	171	7.96%
2007	1,943	160	8.23%

Source: Surveillance Reports, North Carolina Division of Public Health, HIV/STD Prevention & Care Branch, 2005, 2006, 2007, <http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/hiv>.

### Adult and Adolescent Annual AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population, by Race/Ethnicity, Reported in 2006, North Carolina

Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic/Latino
5.3	54.8	23.8

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org)

# SOUTH CAROLINA

## Demographic and epidemiological facts:

Estimated state population July 1, 2007	4,408,000
Estimated Latino/Hispanic population July 1, 2007	169,000 (3.83%)
Reported HIV/AIDS cases Dec 31, 2007	17,384
Statewide rate per 100,000 (include deaths)	39.4

### South Carolina reported overall and Hispanic HIV incidence, 2005-2007

Year	HIV incidence	'Other' incidence	'Other' as % of total
2005	773	41*	5.30%
2006	782	47*	6.01%
2007	774	49*	6.33%

Source: STD/HIV Division Surveillance Report, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, December 2005, December 2006, December 2007, [www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/hiv](http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/hiv) - [www.scdhec.net/health/disease/stdhiv/docs](http://www.scdhec.net/health/disease/stdhiv/docs)

\*'Other' includes non-Hispanics, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American. The cumulative Hispanic-only proportion of total cases in South Carolina is estimated by DHEC to be 2.1%.

### Adult and Adolescent Annual AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population, by Race/Ethnicity, Reported in 2006, South Carolina

Caucasian	African-American	Hispanic/Latino
5.8	52.8	27.6

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, [www.statehealthfacts.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.org)