



National Collaborating Centre
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New *Outreach Planning Guide* helps infectious disease practitioners reach out to vulnerable populations at risk for HIV/AIDS

Winnipeg – Preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS is an essential message on World AIDS Day today, but reaching and working with individuals and populations who need help the most continues to be a challenge in Canada and around the world.

“How do you put condoms in the hands of people who work in the sex trade, youth in small communities and other populations who for various reasons may avoid getting them from a clinic or drugstore? How do you get clean needles to individuals who inject drugs?” asks Dr. Margaret Fast, scientific director of the [National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases](#) (NCCID), which has developed an *Outreach Planning Guide* to help public health practitioners plan outreach programs to reach marginalized groups in their own environments.

The Guide, available in English and French, focuses on the challenges of planning and managing an outreach program to help deliver information, services and referrals to populations that practitioners often have difficulty reaching, especially those vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBI).

“The Guide offers a model for outreach, which involves assessing the population, designing and implementing an outreach program and measuring the results. It is the only one of its kind in Canada with a national focus.” Dr. Fast explains.

The Outreach Planning Guide resulted from HIV/STI knowledge and exchange forums that NCCID hosted in 2008 and 2010. Discussion at the forums highlighted the need for a national perspective on outreach.

NCCID recently wrapped up five workshops across Canada to introduce the Guide and to bring outreach professionals together to share their knowledge and expertise working directly with vulnerable populations.

Workshops were held in Halifax, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton and Montreal, and participants provided real-life examples to help provide context for the Guide. “By consulting with public health practitioners across the country, we heard first-hand about how the Guide can be used in practical settings,” says Dr. Fast, adding that due to the popularity of the workshops, NCCID is now considering other opportunities to bring public health practitioners together to implement the Guide.

NCCID is one of six National Collaborating Centres for Public Health funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The six centres form a network across Canada, each hosted by a different institution and focusing on a different topic in public health. Located in Winnipeg, the NCCID is hosted by the [International Centre for Infectious Diseases](#) (ICID) and housed in its downtown office.

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