



POSITIVE WOMEN'S NETWORK
USA

U.S. Positive Women's Network, a
project of WORLD
414 13th Street
Second Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
510-986-0340 **phone**
510-986-0341 **fax**
www.pwn-usa.org

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

2.1% of heterosexuals, 18-50 years old, living in high-poverty urban areas in the U.S. are living with HIV.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

76% of women with HIV had a child under the age of 18 in their homes.

- HIV Cost Services and Utilization Survey

64% of women living with HIV receiving regular medical care had annual incomes under \$10,000 compared to 41% of men

- HIV Cost Services and Utilization Survey

For many women living with HIV, an HIV diagnosis has been a sentence to a lifetime of poverty.

Economic Justice is necessary to address the HIV epidemic among U.S. women. HIV-positive women around the globe carry the heaviest economic burden. As primary caretakers within the family, women have the responsibility of attending to the needs of their partners, parents, children, and increasingly, grandchildren and grandparents. If a woman is HIV-positive, she will often attend to her own needs only after taking care of those who depend on her — sometimes at a cost to her own health. Family responsibilities play a key role in women's ability to take care of their own health.

Challenges

- +** **Poverty increases vulnerability to HIV** – Women who are poor can experience unstable housing, difficulty negotiating safer sex, and living in highly incarcerated communities, increasing risk of HIV/STIs.

... And HIV increases vulnerability to poverty –

- +** **People are incentivized to stay poor:** Benefits programs including ADAP, some medical care services, and housing programs require an HIV-positive individual to earn less than a specified amount of money annually to qualify for benefits. This means HIV-positive women have to keep their incomes low to access medication, housing and other services.
- +** **People are incentivized to get sick:** Some benefits programs require an AIDS diagnosis to qualify. If a woman and/or her dependents need housing but can only qualify once her T-cells go below 200, or once she develops an opportunistic infection, she may be compelled to get sick or allow her T-cells to drop to take of herself and/or her family. This places an increased economic burden on the family.
- +** **Loss of employment related to HIV diagnosis:** a survey showed that 84% of HIV-positive individuals had been employed at the time of their diagnosis, and 81% of those reported having lost employment. Further, 64% of those who had lost employment reported that HIV played a role in their loss of employment.

PWN Recommends

- +** Develop policies/programs that support women's rights to work and to be paid a living wage, regardless of HIV status
- +** Reform policies and programs that incentivize people to get sicker or to be unreasonably poor before achieving eligibility for access basic services like housing, medication, medical care and support services
- +** Compassionate policies that support HIV+ individuals transitioning back into the workplace