

State Advocacy Tools for HIV Providers

October 2024

States enact many laws and policies that affect people with HIV and vulnerable to HIV and their health care providers. Health care professionals have an important role to play in influencing state policymaking as individuals or in coalition with others. Because the advocacy of the HIV Medicine Association and the Ryan White Medical Providers Coalition is focused on the federal level, we developed this resource to support members in leveraging their voices to influence state policy.

INFLUENCE STATE POLICY

Highlighted here are just a few ways to educate and advocate on an issue to effect change.

Submit a Letter to the Editor

Responding to an article published in a local paper that covers an issue of interest through a letter to the editor can be a quick and easy way to raise awareness on an issue. It is important to know the submission guidelines of your local paper, respond quickly to the piece and be concise in your response.

For guidance, see [Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor](#) from PowerPrism. Also see a sample letter to the editor, [Less Money to Fight AIDS](#), published in the *New York Times* by then HIVMA Chair Wendy Armstrong, MD, FIDSA, in response to cuts proposed by Congress to HIV programs in 2017.

Submit an Op-Ed to Your Local or State Paper

Op-eds can be a powerful way to reach policymakers and build support for an issue among the general public.

See [How to Write an Op-Ed or Column](#) from the Harvard Kennedy School and [Writing Effective Op-Eds](#) from Duke's Communicator Tool Kit. Also see a sample op-ed, [Why Tennessee's HIV funding decision imperils lives and public health infrastructure](#), by HIV providers following the state's rejection of Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention HIV prevention funding in 2023.

Develop a Relationship With Your State Legislators

Most policymakers hold health care providers in high regard and benefit from your health care knowledge and expertise in infectious diseases and HIV. You can engage with your legislators and their staff through email, phone calls and/or in-person meetings to educate them on HIV and ID issues in their district and urge them to take a position on a policy issue. Below are a few resources to help engage with policymakers:

- [Look Up Your Legislators](#) (Member Advocacy Program Membership required)
- Know When Your State's Legislature's in Session: [2024 State Legislature Dates](#)
- See the [Tips for Meeting With Legislators](#) table below.

Tips for Meeting With Legislators

- **Know the legislator, the district and its demographics** as well as possible.
- **Provide information about *who you are* and make sure the legislator/staff know how to contact you in the future.**
- **Come prepared.** Bring clinic brochures or other relevant information, such as local HIV-related data.
- **Know the “other side’s” positions and be ready to respectfully respond to them.**
- **Always come with an “ask,”** even if it is an invitation to an event or to visit your clinic.
- **Make your case, briefly and persuasively.** Be specific about what you want the legislator to do and when.
- **Tell a personal story and incorporate local issues and data whenever possible to help make the point.**
- **Be patient and willing to follow a bill throughout the entire process,** which could take an entire legislative session and often multiple sessions.
- **Establish a time when you will expect to receive an answer or follow up.**
- **Find ways to stay connected.** Ask to be on the legislator’s health advisory committee, receive a regular newsletter and attend local events.
- **Follow up promptly with a thank you email and any promised information for the legislators and/or staff** with whom you met.
- **Be polite but feel empowered.** As a constituent, legislators work for you and the other individuals they represent, and you have a right to talk to them and their staff about issues that concern you and impact their constituents.

Join State and Local Coalitions

Effective advocacy often requires working in coalition with others. To amplify your voice, consider joining a state organization or coalition. Below are a few organizations with state chapters to consider joining, depending on your area of interest.

Organization	What They Do
State & Regional ID Societies IDSA Affiliates	In states with state ID societies, they may be engaged in advocacy. IDSA maintains a directory of state societies that are affiliates.
Equality Federation State Affiliates	Collaborates with state-based organizations to advance equality for LGBTQ+ people, including those living with HIV.
American Civil Liberties Union State Affiliates	Focuses on defending and preserving individual rights and liberties, including work on health care access, privacy rights and discrimination against people living with HIV.
The Human Rights Campaign State Affiliates (scroll down)	Focuses on securing equal rights and improving the lives of LGBTQ+ people, including those living with HIV. HRC also has state chapters and partners.
The Southern AIDS Coalition	Works to end the HIV epidemic in the South through community advocacy, policy change and capacity building and offers membership opportunities for individuals and organizations.
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities State Priorities Partnership	Nonpartisan research and policy institute that advances federal and state policies to promote economic justice; improve health; broaden opportunity in areas like housing, health care, employment, and education. Works with a network of 40 independent organizations on state-level policy, including Medicaid, through its State Priorities Partnership.

MAKE IT LOCAL

Data that make the policy or issue relevant to the state or district are important for helping policymakers understand how the issue or policy impacts their community. Below are a few resources for HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ+ data and to compare HIV laws and policies across states. Please [email HIVMA](#) for help finding data on an issue not listed.

Resource	What's Available
KFF: State Health Facts: HIV/AIDS	Provides state-specific data and policy information related to HIV/AIDS in the United States, including on HIV prevalence, testing, treatment and spending in addition to health policies and spending.
AIDSVu: Interactive Map	Provides data and maps by county on key HIV indicators, including new diagnoses, PrEP, HIV testing, viral suppression, late diagnosis and mortality.
Movement Advancement Project: LGBTQ Equality by State	Provides interactive maps that track state and local laws, such as nondiscrimination, health care, criminal justice and relationship recognition.
KFF Policy Tracker: Youth Access to Gender-Affirming Care and State Policy Restrictions	Tracks state policies regarding gender-affirming care.
Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention: State HIV Prevention Laws	Covers state laws related to HIV criminalization laws, testing requirements and confidentiality provisions.
MAP: HIV Criminalization Laws	Tracks state laws that penalize people living with HIV for behaviors that would not be crimes if they did not have HIV.
American Immigration Council: State Fact Sheets State & Local Initiatives	State and local immigration data, including share of population, health care contributions, DACA-eligibility and more. Also maintains a state and local newsletter to stay informed on immigrant programming and policymaking.

HOW HIVMA CAN HELP

HIVMA does not have the capacity to engage in advocacy at the state level, but we encourage our members to get involved in local advocacy to help shape policies that directly affect you and your patients. Below are ways that we can provide support. Please [email HIVMA](#) with any questions.

State Fact Sheets

HIVMA has developed state-specific one-pagers on a limited number of topics such as the need for a national PrEP program and ID workforce shortages. Please [email HIVMA](#) to request your state's fact sheet.

State Advocacy Alerts

An important way to influence lawmakers and policy at the state level is through targeted advocacy campaigns. HIVMA's grassroots advocacy platform can be used to communicate with other HIVMA members in your state to urge policymakers to take action on an issue that relates to IDSA's or HIVMA's policy priorities. The platform facilitates mobilization by allowing members to easily personalize a

prepopulated letter and email it to state lawmakers. Please [email HIVMA](#) to learn more about the criteria and the process.

HIVMA Policy Positions

If HIVMA has taken a position on an issue related to your advocacy, it may be helpful to reference it in your advocacy. Below are HIVMA’s policy positions most relevant to current state legislative activity. A complete list is available on our [website](#). Please [email us](#) for more information or for talking points on a related issue that is not covered below.

<p>Policy Positions</p>
<p>IDSA and HIVMA on Team-Based Infectious Diseases Care and the Roles of Advanced Practice Providers and Clinical Pharmacists (2024)</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaborative team-based care model that involves a wide range of health care professionals such as nurse practitioners, physician assistants and clinical pharmacists is essential in expanding access to ID services and in delivering the most equitable ID and HIV health care. • IDSA and HIVMA recommend that nurse practitioners, physician assistants and clinical pharmacists be able to practice at the full extent of their training and expertise and have a consultative relationship with an ID or HIV expert physician.
<p>Protecting Patient Autonomy and the Provider-Patient Relationship (2022)</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government interference in the provider-patient relationship causes harm and strips patients of their right to seek out medical services regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability. • The provider-patient relationship must be protected for patients of all backgrounds to seek and access health care in an environment grounded in trust and privacy.
<p>Policy Recommendations to End the Infectious Complications of Illicit Drug Use in the United States: IDSA and HIVMA’s Advocacy Agenda (2020)</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expansion of harm reduction services, such as syringe services programs, and overdose prevention sites is essential to curbing infections and providing stigma-free safe spaces for individuals to seek treatment. • Education and training of health care providers, including infectious disease specialists, in the management of opioid use disorders and substance use disorders should be increased to lessen the barriers for treatment and care.
<p>Discriminatory Laws and Policies Affecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Individuals and the HIV and STD Epidemics (2016)</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminatory laws and policies against LGBTQ+ individuals have a detrimental impact on public health measures to eradicate HIV and STD epidemics and worsen health disparities. • State policies that discriminate create an unsafe environment for LGBTQ+ individuals seeking and accessing health care services.
<p>Criminalization of HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections and Other Communicable Diseases (2015)</p> <p>Key Points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The criminalization of the transmission of HIV, STI and other communicable diseases undermines public health measures to reduce or eliminate disease transmission. • State policymakers should implement evidence-based measures that will encourage individuals to seek out health care services such as testing and other preventive methods, which will lead to better health outcomes for all.