

# HIV Infection

## POSITION STATEMENT

Approved by the Board of Trustees, June 2003  
Approved by the Assembly, May 2003

"Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees...These are ... position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects..."  
*APA Operations Manual.*

*(Based on an earlier statement approved by the Board in December 1990 and the Assembly in May 1992.)*

### I. Introduction

In the following statement, the term HIV infection is used to refer to the entire range of clinical conditions, including the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in adults and children, which is caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

### II. Position Statement

1. Psychiatry should participate actively in public education to counteract inappropriate reactions to HIV infection. The APA vigorously supports efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination which may occur in response to HIV infection (see *Position Statement on HIV and Discrimination*).
2. Psychiatrists have a responsibility to educate themselves, their colleagues, and their patients regarding the medical, psychiatric, social, ethical, and legal aspects of HIV infection.

3. The confidentiality of information regarding HIV testing or status should be protected (see *Position Statement on Confidentiality, Disclosure and Protection of Others*).
4. Psychiatrists have an obligation to provide professional care in a competent and compassionate manner. *APA Policy Guideline for Outpatient Psychiatric Services* and *Policy Guideline for Inpatient Psychiatric Units* provide specific recommendations concerning HIV-related care.
5. Psychiatrists need to be aware of the special issues for certain populations, including pregnant women, children and adolescents, ethnic and other minorities, geriatric populations, people with substance use disorders, children orphaned by AIDS, and patients in forensic settings. For examples, refer to *the Position Statement on HIV Infection and Pregnant Women*, and the *Policy Guideline on HIV and Children*, and *Policy Guideline on HIV and Adolescents*.
6. There is a continuing need for research on many aspects of HIV infection which have an impact on psychiatry including, but not limited to, questions concerning prevention strategies, the ramifications of HIV testing, psychiatric complications of the disease, psychopharmacologic interventions, neuropsychiatric testing, and suicide.
7. Psychiatrists are urged to help counter the negative effects of stigma, discrimination, violence, trauma, and mental disorders on the needs of those infected or affected by HIV.
8. Psychiatrists are encouraged to engage in global efforts and collaborations with international colleagues relevant to the HIV epidemic. Those efforts include, but are not limited to, prevention strategies; HIV testing and counseling; access to psychiatric and other medical care and treatment; and information exchange about best practices.