



GETTING THE WORD(S) OUT

Ideas for Faith-Based Institutions

WHY

Many of our community members seek faith leadership for trustworthy guidance. In matters of health, faith leaders provide a great service to bring education and truth to their congregants.

Today, we are hopeful that the information in this toolkit will help you share the information about a breakthrough in HIV prevention: undetectable equals untransmittable, or U=U.

On the other side of this toolkit, we offer ideas and suggest activities. Among these is the idea to write an article about U=U. We'd like to start this toolkit with a draft article for you to use. We feel it explains the issue well:

Ending Shame and Talking about HIV

Nearly five decades ago, the virus now known as HIV and the syndrome it causes, AIDS, were new and terrifying realities in our communities. Our communities are still struggling with the HIV epidemic to this day. Though HIV is not curable at this point, we are thrilled to share the news about undetectable equals untransmittable, or U=U.

U=U means that a person with an undetectable HIV viral load who is taking medications as prescribed cannot transmit HIV to a sexual partner. In addition to HIV testing, and using pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and condoms, U=U is an important breakthrough in helping our communities to achieve zero new HIV infections and to reduce stigma for people living with HIV.

We have seen the shame and fear associated with HIV. Perhaps you are afraid of it. Perhaps you struggle with it. Our *[please fill in: church, synagogue, mosque, etc.]* is moved to encourage you to help us end the shame and stigma surrounding HIV by reminding you that medical treatment works to prevent transmission of HIV. With treatment, people living with HIV are stronger, healthier, and unable to transmit the virus through sex. We encourage all to get tested, if they have not already. If someone is living with HIV, we want to remind them that they are not alone - we support them, and, if needed, can help them get into care.

Just as all those who live with a chronic illness are valued, we want to remind anyone who is living with HIV they are vital and a cherished member of our community. We believe that all who may be living with HIV should live free from fear of exposing those they love, live free from shame, live free from stigma and know they are welcomed, needed, and loved.

With testing, prevention, treatment, and open dialogue, we can stop HIV. Please take time to learn more at uequalsmaryland.org.

GOALS

- Reduce the shame and stigma surrounding the disease.
- Encourage people who haven't been tested and people with HIV into treatment.
- Encourage those without HIV to seek counseling on HIV prevention methods, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and help them make informed decisions about what is right for them.
- Spread the word that with consistent treatment that fully suppresses HIV to undetectable levels in the blood, HIV cannot be transmitted through sex. HIV is a proven form of HIV prevention.

QUICK IDEAS

- Use social media to spread the word:
 - Download the social media kit on uequalsummaryland.org.
 - Post the images with suggested text and hashtags: #uequalsumd #sciencenotstigma
- Download or order items from uequalsummaryland.org to share with your congregation, including:
 - Posters to print and hang in bathrooms or on community boards.
 - Rack cards explaining the details about U=U.
 - Folded business cards with information about U=U.

ACTIVITIES

Coordinating any of the activities below? Contact the Baltimore City Health Department or connect with a U=U Maryland coalition partner for support, including expert speakers and information about free HIV testing - visit UequalsUMaryland.org/tools-events for more information.

- Hold quarterly *Are U in the Conversation?* sessions offering free, walk-in HIV testing and one-on-one chats about U=U, PrEP, PEP, and other prevention information.
- Live stream a Q&A about U=U for your Facebook or YouTube followers.
- Put a link to the uequalsummaryland.org campaign site on your website and social media page.
- Host an event for National Faith HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, August 27th, and invite experts to provide a Q&A session about HIV and AIDS.
- Invite a person living with HIV, their partner, and a medical provider to talk about U=U.
- Sponsor a benefit concert or show and use the proceeds to support HIV prevention programs and provide U=U education during the event.
- Reach out to people living with HIV and to their families and friends through sermons, programs, bulletin articles.
- Establish a support group for family members of people living with HIV to help them manage their medication and provide faith and emotional support.
- Use the intro text on the first page as a basis for an article for your newsletter or e-mail newsletter.