

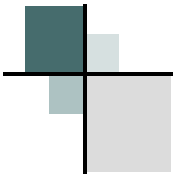
***HIV Services***

**CONSUMER NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT**

Sonoma County Department of  
Health Services

Prevention and Planning  
Division

December 2008



## Background

In an effort to identify needs or gaps in Sonoma County HIV/AIDS comprehensive medical care, the Prevention and Planning team designed a needs assessment survey for persons living with HIV and using these services.

This data will be used in the development of the 2009 comprehensive plan for HIV/AIDS care in Sonoma County. In addition, results from this survey will inform the process of the local Funding Allocation Working Group for Ryan White grantees.

This needs assessment survey was intended for all persons with HIV or AIDS and receiving any type of publicly funded service in Sonoma County. Topics covered by the survey included access to care and specialty services, general, physical and mental health, substance abuse issues, support systems and personal goals.

## Methods

Surveys were advertised and distributed through eight local service agencies ranging in scope from primary medical care to case management and food assistance. Surveys were distributed three ways:

- English and Spanish paper surveys were distributed at seven sites.
- English surveys were mailed to clients with a return envelope (1 site).
- An English only survey was created online using Survey Monkey.

The online survey was advertised through several email distribution lists of HIV consumers. Business cards with the online survey link were disseminated at each of the seven sites. In addition, three agencies provided access to the electronic survey onsite.

The survey was distributed between November 17th and December 5th, 2008. All completed surveys were entered into the Survey Monkey database. The data was downloaded into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet then analyzed using SAS v. 8.

## Results

### Survey Response

Of the 500 paper surveys either mailed or handed out, 150 were completed (30% response rate). An additional 47 surveys were completed online for a total of 197 completed surveys. One duplicate was excluded, 196 surveys in the final analysis.

### Personal Information

#### Demographics

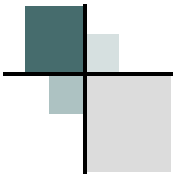
The majority of survey respondents were male (86%), between the ages of 45 and 64 (62%) and non-Latino (89%) (Table 1). This is similar to the demographic profile of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Sonoma County where the majority is male (90%), and non-Latino (87%).

The majority of all respondents reported being homosexual or

Table 1	Demographics of Survey Respondents	
	(N=196)	
	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	168	86
Female	26	13
Other	2	1
<b>Age</b>		
<24	3	2
24-44	57	29
45-64	122	62
65+	10	5
Unknown	4	2
<b>Race</b>		
Latino	21	11
Non-/Latino	175	89
White	155	88
African American	8	5
Other	12	7
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>		
Heterosexual	41	21
Bisexual	14	7
Homosexual/Lesbian	134	68
Other	1	<1
Declined to state	5	3
<b>Educational Level</b>		
Some high school	14	7
HS diploma or GED	25	13
Tech/trade school	9	5
Some college	67	34
College deg. or more	79	40
Unknown	2	1
<b>Primary Language</b>		
English	175	89
Spanish	10	5
Other	2	1
Unknown	9	5

lesbian (68%), followed by heterosexual (21%). Nearly three-quarters of all respondents have attended some college (34%) or had a college degree or higher (40%).

Compared to male respondents, female respondents were younger (50% vs. 26% aged 22-44 ) and the



majority reported heterosexual orientation (92%).

### Employment and Volunteer Activities

Half of all survey respondents are not working and not seeking employment (Figure 1). An additional 15% are not working but seeking employment.

Approximately one-third of all survey respondents had a volunteer activity they attended at least once a week. This proportion did not differ significantly by employment status.

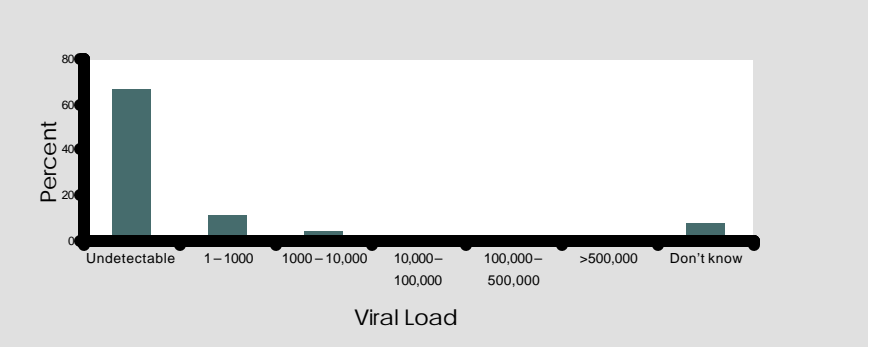
Taken together, 56% of all survey respondents were either employed in some way and/or had a volunteer activity they attended at least once a week.

### HIV Diagnosis and Status

Forty percent of survey respondents were diagnosed with HIV outside of Sonoma County. On average, respondents have been living with HIV for an average of 16 years (range 0-31 years).

Over two-thirds (67%) of respon-

**Figure 2** Viral Load (N=187)



dents had an undetectable viral load (Figure 2). Very few respondents had a viral load over 100,000 (N=4), however eight percent of respondents did not know their current viral load.

### Health Care

#### Health Insurance and Co-payments

All but four percent of survey respondents had some type of health insurance (Figure 3). Respondents were asked to declare all insurance plans they currently carried. The most commonly carried insurance plans were MediCal (50%), followed by Medicare (45%) and private insurance (24%).

Twenty-five percent of those surveyed report that the ability to pay gets in the way of HIV or

other health care more than half the time or greater. When examined by type of insurance, persons who had private carriers reported difficulties with ability to pay more often than those with public insurance (28% vs. 21%, respectively). This difference, however, was not statistically significant.

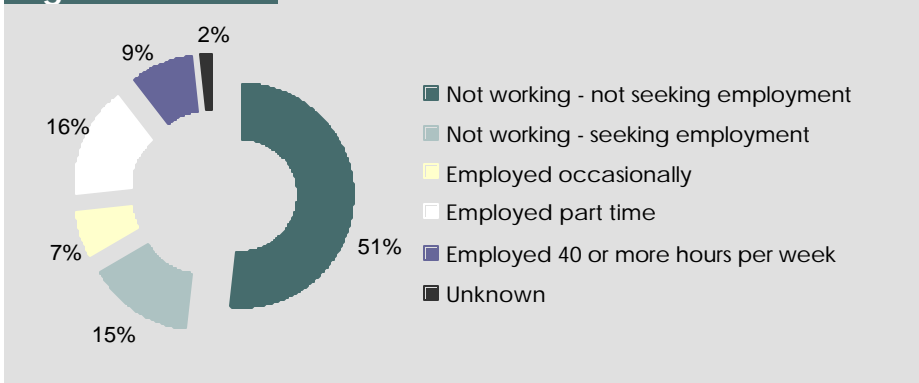
#### Primary Care

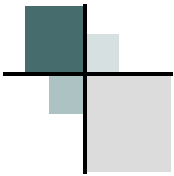
The majority of survey respondents have a primary care provider (93%). About one in five have missed visits in the last twelve months. The primary reasons for missed visits included transportation problems and forgetting about the appointment.

Among those without a primary care provider (7%), the most common reasons stated were lack of insurance coverage or lack of the financial capacity to pay for services.

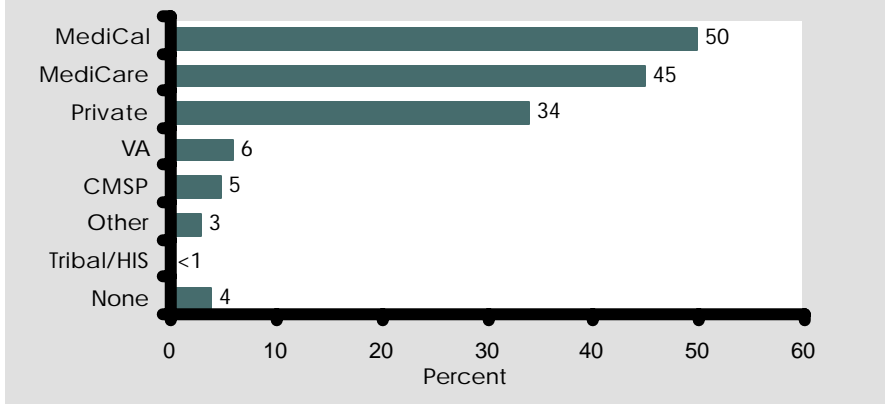
Forty percent of respondents reported not having a regular dentist, and 36% have not had a dental appointment in the last 12 months. The most common reason given for not having a dental check up was lack of financial resources to pay for the visit (45%).

**Figure 1** Current Working Situation (N=196)





**Figure 3** Health Insurance (N=195)



When examined by type of insurance, persons who did not have a dental visit in the last 12 months were slightly more likely to have private carrier (81%) compared to those with a public carrier (71%), however, this difference was not statistically significant.

## Access to Care

### Knowledge of Benefits/Services

Survey respondents were given a list of services and asked if they were able to access these services if they needed them (Figure 4). Respondents were most knowledgeable about accessing Social Security (91%), the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP, 89%), benefits counseling (85%), and mental health services (84%).

Respondents were least knowledgeable about accessing the General Assistance Program (40%), dental health insurance coverage (39%), Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency/Health Insurance Premium Payment program (CARE HIPP 39%), and employment search assistance (36%).

### Barriers to Accessing Care

Eighty-four percent of survey respondents did not have trouble getting to medical, dental, or other appointments. Among those who did (N=29), transportation was the most common barrier (55%). For those who cited transportation as a barrier (N=17), transportation assistance was the selected most often as a solution (65%).

Twenty percent of respondents

need help filling out forms at medical, social services and other agencies. Persons needing assistance with forms were more often primary Spanish speakers (16% vs. 3%) and/or Latino (22% vs. 8%) compared to those who did not need help. Among those who did need help, a person to assist was the most frequently cited solution (43%).

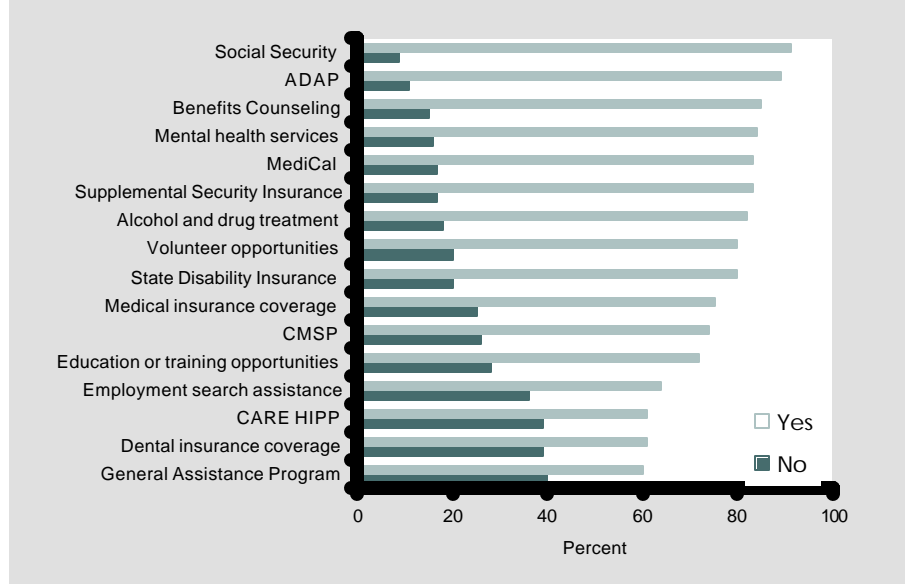
### Specialty Services

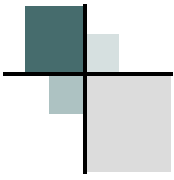
The majority of survey respondents were able to access specialty medical services (76%). Among those who were not able to access these services, the primary reasons stated were lack of financial resources to pay for services (46%) and lack of adequate insurance coverage (32%).

## General Health

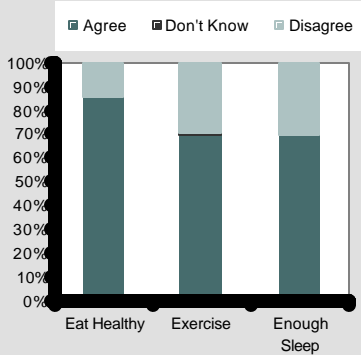
### Physical Health

**Figure 4** Knowledge of where to get benefits or services





**Figure 5** Frequency of Healthy Behaviors

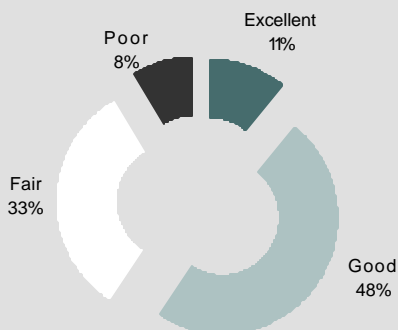


The majority of survey respondents report eating healthy foods (Figure 5, 84%). Just over two-thirds of respondents report exercising regularly or getting enough sleep (69%). Compared to those aged 25-44, persons aged 45-64 more frequently report eating healthy (80% vs. 88%), exercising regularly (61% vs. 71%) and getting enough sleep (60% vs. 70%), but these differences are not statistically significant.

More than half of survey respondents (59%) rated their physical health as good or excellent (Figure 6).

Persons surveyed were asked to list the top two things they cur-

**Figure 6** Physical Health Rating



rently do to improve their health. The most commonly stated improvements were eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise.

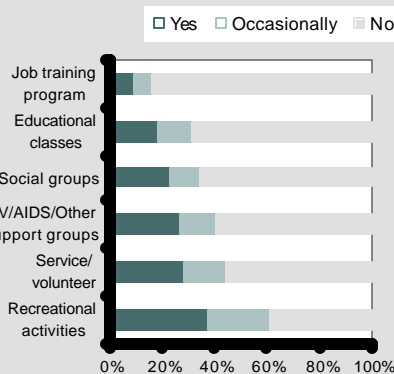
## Social Support

### Family, Friends and Community Involvement

The majority of survey respondents have friends or family that can help when needed (81%).

Survey respondents are most often involved in recreational activities (61%, Figure 7), service activities (45%) and HIV/AIDS support groups (41%) and least often involved in job training programs

**Figure 7** Program Involvement



(9%) and educational classes (18%).

### Personal Health Management

Approximately one in five surveyed have trouble either following up on provider suggestions on their own (18%) or coordinating their health care and HIV services on their own (22%).

The majority of respondents take their HIV medication as prescribed with 56% never missing doses and an additional 34% only missing doses once or twice a month.

## Goals

The majority of those surveyed had long term goals for the next 4-5 years (70%). Among those with long term goals, the categories under which these goals fell was most often life (79%), financial (67%), medical/health (64%), spiritual (52%), and educational (45%).

## Living Situation

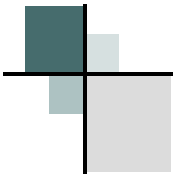
Most survey respondents reported living in a safe place (93%) and are happy where they are living (84%). Many are able to pay rent on time (75%), pay utility bills on time (71%) and, overall, are living in a place they can afford (73%).

## Alcohol and Substance Abuse

### Alcohol and Drug Use

The majority of survey respondents do not drink alcohol (56%) and do not use any drugs\* (88%). Among those who did use drugs or alcohol (N=86), 30% wanted to cut down on their use. This group felt that their drug or alcohol use had gotten in the way of making plans for the day (65%), reach-

\*Participants were asked, "During the past 12 months, have you used any drugs (not including marijuana)?"



ing goals (55%), taking HIV medications (50%) and keeping safe (50%).

Ten of the respondents who wanted to cut down on alcohol or drug use were interested in alcohol or substance use services, particularly one-on-one counseling (N=8), 12-step groups (N=6) and other support groups (N=5).

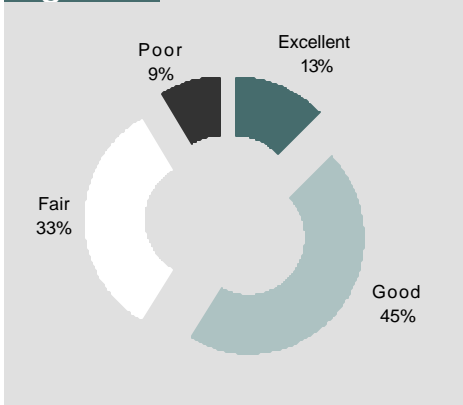
### Methamphetamines

Among those who used drugs, 12 respondents indicated that they used methamphetamines. All 12 indicated that they would like to cut down on their use. Nine of these respondents were interested in drug treatment services, most often one-on-one counseling (N=7), support groups (N=5), and 12-step groups (N=4).

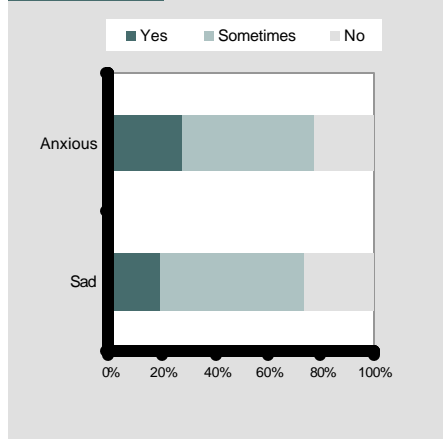
### Mental Health

Fifty-nine percent of respondents rated their mental health as good or excellent (Figure 8). Overall, one-third of those surveyed had been diagnosed with a major mental health problem.

**Figure 8** Mental Health Rating



**Figure 9** Depression/Anxiety Indicators



When survey respondents were asked whether they feel sad or anxious most of the time, most did at least sometimes (Figure 9). Nearly one-third (27%) felt anxious much of the time with an additional 50% feeling anxious sometimes. One in five felt sad much of the time (20%), with an additional 53% feeling sad sometimes.

### Daily Living

#### Challenges

Financial challenges were the most frequently cited factor getting in the way of daily life among those surveyed (Figure 10). Second most common were

physical problems, other health challenges and HIV/AIDS.

Other notable factors included mental illness (40% yes or occasionally) and transportation difficulties (35% yes or occasionally).

### Other People with HIV - Not In Care

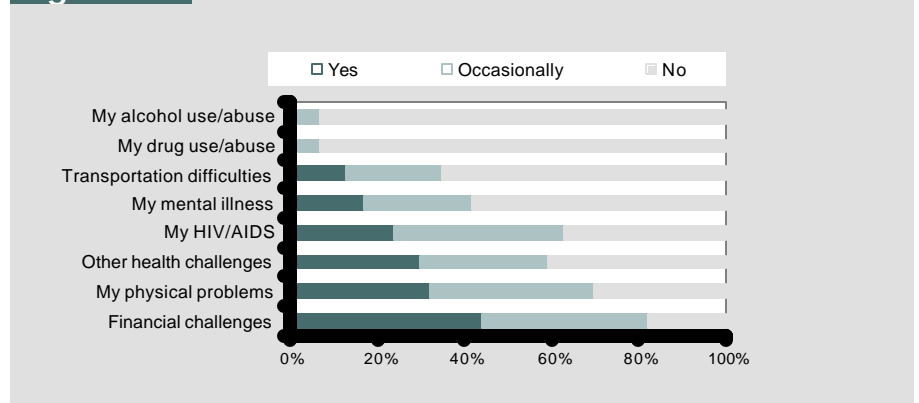
Those surveyed were asked if they knew anyone who was HIV positive, but not in care, then asked to suppose the reason they were not in care.

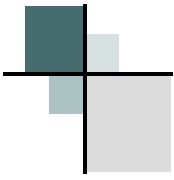
Fifteen percent of respondents (N=28) knew of someone who was HIV positive and not in care. Of the twenty-five who listed a possible reason as to why, seventy-two percent thought it was fear or denial. Other reasons for why the person was not in care included lack of trust in medications (36%), alcohol or drug use (33%), lack of trust of service organizations (24%), and mental illness (20%).

### Summary

Overall, our population surveyed indicated successful

**Figure 10** Factors that Interfere with Daily Life





and high utilization of the care system. Among those surveyed, the majority of respondents had low viral loads (78% <1000), high rates of health insurance coverage (96%), had a regular primary care provider (93%), are able to fill out forms (80%) and access specialty care (76%).

In addition, most respondents have friends and family who can help when they need it (81%), are able to follow up on provider suggestions (82%) and coordinate their own health care (77%), and rarely skip doses of medication (80%).

## Potential Service Gaps

Possible gaps identified by this need assessment include dental care, employment assistance

and potential for mental health outreach.

### Dental Care

Over one third of respondents did not have a regular dentist nor had a dental visit in the past twelve months. Respondents were not highly knowledgeable about how to access dental insurance coverage with 39% of those surveyed declaring they did not know how to access this service.

### Employee Assistance

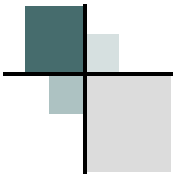
Fifteen percent of those surveyed were not working but seeking employment, however, employment search assistance was one of the services respondents were least knowledgeable about. The job training program was also the least util-

ized program among those offered.

### Mental Health Care

One third of all respondents had been diagnosed with a major mental health problem. Anxiety and sadness were present at least sometimes for nearly 75% of all respondents. Mental illness, in general, got in the way of daily life for over 40% of respondents.

The Prevention Planning Group will continue to evaluate the data provided from this needs assessment and begin to address these gaps through outreach, education, and explore avenues to advertise available services.



## Appendix—Raw Data Tables

### Section 1—Personal Information

What is your working situation now?		
	N	%
Paid employment under 20 hours a week	14	7
Paid employment over 20 but under 40 hours a week	17	9
Paid employment at 40 hours a week	15	8
Paid employment over 40 hours a week	3	2
Paid occasional employment	13	7
Not working, seeking employment	30	15
Not working, not seeking employment	101	51
Not declared	3	2

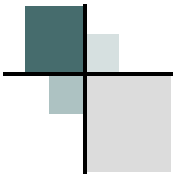
Do you have a volunteer activity you go to at least once a week?		
	N	%
Yes	67	34
No	125	64
Not declared	4	2

Was your HIV diagnosis in Sonoma County?		
	N	%
Yes	79	40
No	114	58
Not declared	3	2

What is your Viral Load (VL)?		
	N	%
VL Undetectable	132	67
VL 1 – 1000	21	11
VL 1000 – 10,000	8	4
VL 10,000 – 100,000	6	3
VL 100,000 – 500,000	3	2
VL >500,000	1	<1
Don't know	16	8
Not declared	9	5

### Section 2—Health Care

What type of health insurance do you have? (Please choose all that apply) (N=195)		
	N	%
MediCal	98	50
MediCare	88	45
Private	67	34
CMSP	10	5
Tribal or Urban Indian Health Services	1	<1
Veterans Administration	11	6
Other	5*	3
None	8	4



Section 2—Health Care (cont.)

**How often does your ability to pay your medical co-payments or share of costs get in the way of getting you HIV or other health care services? (N=185)**

	N	%
Always or Almost Always	18	10
More than Half the Time	11	6
About Half the Time	16	9
Never or Almost Never	78	42
I have no medical co-payments	62	33

**Do you have a regular primary care provider (family/general practitioner)? (N=193)**

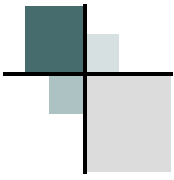
	N	%
Yes	180	93
Visits (N=178)		
0	4	2
1-5	106	61
6-10	43	24
10+	25	14
Missed Visits (N=153)	33	22
Reason (N=32)		
Didn't have a way to get there	8	25
I forgot	8	25
I decided not to go	3	9
I couldn't pay for it	3	9
Other*	10	31
No	13	7
Reason (check all that apply, N=11)		
Lack of insurance	6	55
I can't pay for it	6	55
Don't know how to get one	2	18
I don't need one	1	9
Other	3	27

**Do you have a regular dentist? (N=193)**

	N	%
Yes	118	61
No	75	39

**Have you had a dental check up during the past 12 months? (N=194)**

	N	%
No	70	36
Reason (N=64)		
Didn't have a way to get there	1	2
I forgot	2	3
I decided not to go	6	9
I couldn't pay for it	29	45
Lack of Insurance	3	5
Other*	23	36

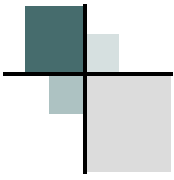


**Section 3—Access to Care**

<b>Do you know where to get benefits or services such as the ones below if you needed them?</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
Social Security	183	17	9
Supplemental Security Insurance	175	29	17
State Disability Insurance	168	34	20
MediCal	178	31	17
Medical insurance coverage	162	40	25
Benefits Counseling	165	24	15
ADAP	174	19	11
Dental insurance coverage	168	65	39
CMSP	165	43	26
General Assistance Program	164	66	40
CARE HIPP	164	64	39
Alcohol and drug treatment	168	31	18
Mental health services	171	28	16
Volunteer opportunities	168	33	20
Education or training opportunities	166	46	28
Employment search assistance	159	57	36

<b>Do you have trouble getting to medical, dental or other appointments? (N=186)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	29	16
If yes, what makes this difficult for you? (N=29)		
Transportation	16	55
Memory	3	10
Insurance issues	3	10
Work conflict/Time	2	7
Financial problems	2	7
If yes, what would make transportation easier for you? (N=17)		
Transportation assistance	11	65
Financial assistance	2	12
Free parking	1	6
Motorized wheelchair	1	6
No	157	84

<b>Do you need help filling out medical, social services, and other forms at agencies? (N=189)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	37	20
If yes, what would make these forms easier to fill out? (N=28)		
A person to help	12	43
Shorter/Simpler/Less Bureaucracy	6	21
No	152	80



### Section 3—Access to Care (cont.)

Are you able to get specialty medical care services as needed? (N=191)		
	N	%
Yes	145	76
Doesn't Know/Doesn't Apply	12	6
No	34	18
If no, please indicate the reason (check all that apply, N=28)		
Lack of insurance	9	32
Can't pay for it	13	46
Don't know how to get services	4	14
I don't need the services	5	18
Services not available in my community	1	4
Other	7	28

### Section 4—General Health

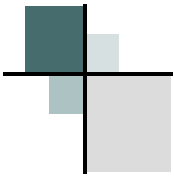
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements			
	N	Strongly Agree/Agree %	Disagree/Strongly Disagree %
I eat healthy foods	192	84	14
I exercise regularly.	188	69	31
I get enough sleep.	189	69	31

In general, how would you rate your physical health? (N=193)		
	N	%
Excellent	21	11
Good	93	48
Fair	63	33
Poor	16	8

### Section 5—Support

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements			
	N	Strongly Agree/Agree %	Disagree/Strongly Disagree %
I have friends or family members who can help me when I need it.	191	81	17

Have you been involved in any of the following programs during the past 12 months?				
	N	Yes	Occasionally	No
Social groups	184	23	12	66
Recreational activities	188	38	23	39
Service learning/volunteer activities	184	29	16	55
Educational classes	181	18	14	68
Job training program	182	9	7	84
HIV/AIDS or other support groups	185	27	14	59
Other	34			



## Section 5—Support (cont.)

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:			
	N	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree
It is hard for me to follow up on my provider's health suggestions on my own	191	18	82
I have trouble coordinating my health care and other HIV services by myself	189	22	77

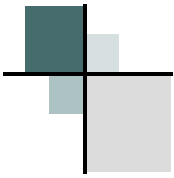
How often have you skipped taking your HIV/AIDS medication as prescribed? (N=184)		
	N	%
Never/Have not skipped	103	56
Once or twice a month	62	34
Once or twice a week	8	4
More than twice a week	4	2
I have stopped taking my medicines	7	4

## Section 7—Goals

Do you have long-term goals for the next 4-5 years? (N=187)		
	N	%
No	56	30
Yes	131	70
If yes, what category would the goal fall under (check all that apply)		
Life	104	79
Medical/Health	84	64
Financial	88	67
Educational	59	45
Spiritual	68	52
Other	12	9

## Section 8—Living Situation

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:*			
	N	Strongly Agree/Agree (%)	Disagree/Strongly Disagree (%)
I am happy where I live.	187	84	15
I live in a safe place.	186	93	6
I live in a place I can afford.	186	73	25
I am able to pay my rent on time.	184	75	17
I am able to pay my utility bills on time.	186	71	26



## Section 9—Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Do you drink alcohol? (N=189)		
	N	%
Yes	84	44
No	105	56

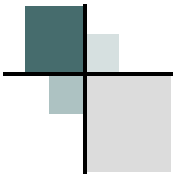
During the past 12 months, have you used any drugs (not including marijuana)? (N=187)		
	N	%
Yes	22	12
No	165	88

If yes, what was the main drug that you have used? (N=16)*		
	N	%
Methamphetamine/Speed	12	75
Marijuana	3	19
<i>*One response was not a specific drug</i>		

If you have used drugs or alcohol, have you ever wanted to cut down on your use? (N=86)		
	N	%
Yes	26	30
No	60	70

If you do want to cut down on your drug use, has your drinking or drug use gotten in the way of (please check all that apply): (N=20)		
	N	%
Taking your HIV medications	10	50
Reaching your goals	11	55
Keeping yourself safe	10	50
Making plans for your day	13	65
Getting to the doctor	7	35
Other	6	30

Are you interested in any alcohol or substance use services? (N=24)		
	N	%
Yes	10	42
If yes, what types of services are you interested in?		
Support group	5	50
12-step group	6	60
One-on-one counseling	8	80
Residential treatment	1	10
Other	1	10
No	14	58



## Section 10—Mental Health

<b>In general, how would you rate your mental health? (N=186)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Excellent	24	13
Good	85	46
Fair	61	33
Poor	16	9

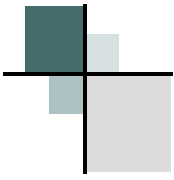
<b>Have you ever been diagnosed with a major mental health issue? (N=184)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	61	33
No	123	67

<b>Do you feel sad much of the time? (N=188)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	37	20
Sometimes	100	53
No	51	27

<b>Do you feel anxious much of the time? (N=187)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	51	27
Sometimes	94	50
No	42	23

## Section 11—Daily Living

<b>Do any of these factors get in the way of your day-to-day life?</b>				
	<b>N</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>No</b>
My physical problems.	179	32	37	30
My mental illness.	175	17	25	59
My alcohol use/abuse.	173	2	5	93
My drug use/abuse.	168	2	5	93
My HIV/AIDS.	176	24	39	37
Other health challenges.	174	30	29	41
Financial challenges.	178	44	38	18
Transportation difficulties.	170	13	22	65
Other	12			



Section 11—Daily Living (cont.)

<b>Do you know anyone who knows that they are HIV positive but is not getting regular health care? (N=186)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
No	158	85
Yes	28	15
If yes, what do you thin is the reason why they are not in care (check all that apply) (N=25)		
Fear/denial	18	72
They don't trust medications	9	36
They don't trust service organizations	6	24
Immigration concerns	3	12
Mental illness	5	20
Alcohol/drug use	8	33
Feel they do not need the care	5	20
Other	9	36

<b>Would you be willing to give him/her a copy of this survey (N=21)</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	10	48
No	11	52