



# NATIONAL YOUTH HIV & AIDS AWARENESS DAY

**Engaging Youth Voices in the HIV & AIDS Response**

**@YOUTHAIDSDAY**

**#NYHAAD**

**STATE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT**

Dear Advocate,

Welcome to the **National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (NYHAAD) State Advocacy Toolkit!** This toolkit includes the tools and resources you will need to advocate for NYHAAD at the state and local level. Today's young people are the first generation who have never known a world without HIV and AIDS. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in four new HIV cases is among youth ages 13 to 24. Every month, 1,000 young people acquire HIV and over 76,400 young people are currently living with HIV across the country. While there has been much talk and activism about an AIDS-free generation, we know that this is not possible without legislative action.

This toolkit serves as an educational guide for state and local organizations, advocates, and community leaders to take legislative action and intentionally engage youth in all levels of HIV advocacy and policy actions.

While NYHAAD will be celebrated across the country every year on April 10th, we know that to truly reach an AIDS-free generation, we need to hold our elected officials accountable and have young people at the forefront of our HIV and AIDS advocacy efforts.

Have questions about the state advocacy toolkit? Contact Sophia Kerby, Senior Manager, State & Local Campaigns, at [sophia@advocatesforyouth.org](mailto:sophia@advocatesforyouth.org).

## TOOLKIT CONTENT

This toolkit includes information on the following:

- How to get state and local government engaged in NYHAAD
- How to apply for a city or country proclamation on NYHAAD
- How to advocate for a NYHAAD state resolution
- Sample proclamation and resolution language

## **WHAT IS NYHAAD?**

National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (or NYHAAD) is a day to educate the public about the impact of HIV and AIDS on young people as well as highlight the amazing work young people are doing across the country to fight the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day is an annual observance that takes place on April 10th.

## **WHY A NATIONAL YOUTH HIV AND AIDS AWARENESS DAY?**

Today's young people are the first generation who have never known a world without HIV and AIDS. In the United States, one in four new HIV cases is among youth ages 13 to 24. Every month, 1,000 young people acquire HIV and over 70,000 young people ages 13-24 are currently living with HIV across the country, with at least half unaware of their HIV status. While there has been much talk about an AIDS-free generation, we know that is not possible without our nation's youth at the forefront of legislative advocacy and other forms of activism. Young people and their allies are determined to end this epidemic once and for all and this day is a way to acknowledge the great work young people are already engaging in to do so.

## **WHERE WILL NATIONAL YOUTH HIV & AIDS AWARENESS DAY BE CELEBRATED?**

National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day will be celebrated all across the country. There will be events hosted by various organizations and individuals in high schools, colleges, churches, community centers and more! There also will be opportunities for online participation.

## IT'S ALL LOCAL

Local politics and policies play a huge role in the lives of the residents in their local communities. From roads and public transit to public health services, local politics is often where policy most directly impacts people's day to day lives. Getting attention at the state and local level on NYHAAD will not only elevate the importance of reducing HIV and AIDS in the nation, but also hold our politicians accountable to the most pressing issues impacting our communities.

At the end of the day, elected officials have to pay attention to the issues and concerns of their constituents – their hometown voters who put them in office.

Official action from your city, county, or state on NYHAAD can show where your legislators stand on issues that directly impact their community, for example, where they stand on the health and rights of young people. A proclamation and a state resolution are two common actions that state and local governments can take to make a statement and show their support.

## WHAT IS A PROCLAMATION?

Proclamations are primarily ceremonial documents that are issued by the Office of the Mayor to increase and uplift public awareness on important issues, like the health and rights of young people, which impact the day to day life of residents that live in a community. Proclamations are often used as educational tools for community leaders and local organizations to engage in peer education around important issues that directly impact their communities, like the rates of HIV and other STIs among young people.

## WHAT IS A RESOLUTION?

State legislatures, similar to Congress, introduce ideas for new laws or change existing laws through bills or resolutions. Resolutions can basically be the state version of a city proclamation, which means they can be used to make an official statement, while increasing and uplifting public awareness on important issues. The type of resolution the sponsor chooses depends on who supports the issue: whether it's one house, both houses, or both houses and the governor. While there are several different types of legislative resolutions the most powerful statements is when the majority of the legislature and the governor support the resolution (often called a joint or concurrent resolution). *This will likely be the type of resolution that you will be advocating for with NYHAAD and the one we recommend.*

## WHY SHOULD I APPLY FOR ONE?

Proclamations and resolutions can also be used in a wider strategy to hold your elected officials accountable. In this case, if your city, county or state passes a NYHAAD proclamation or resolution, when you engage in advocacy efforts down the road, you can hold them (and other government officials) accountable in centering the health and rights of young people!

Having your state, city or county pass a proclamation for National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day (NYHAAD) on April 10th can serve as a stepping stone to bringing the issue of health and rights of young people to the forefront in your local community.

Note: Each legislature operates differently and uses its own state-specific language for procedures and policy-related matters. For example, some states use "memorial" instead of "resolution" and others do not have a "House of Representatives" but instead a "General Assembly". This guide uses general language and is not specific to one particular state. Please do some initial research about how your state legislature works!

## HOT TO GET A CITY OR COUNTY PROCLAMATION ON NYHAAD

**Step 1. Visit your local government website.** Each city and county has a slightly different process and criteria for accepting proclamations. Make sure to first check the website to get a list of all the documents and/or requirements needed for the proclamation application. Most cities and counties will require you to be a resident of the city or county and include the proposed proclamation language in your request. If information is not easily accessible online, contact the Office of the Mayor.

**Step 2. Plan ahead.** Since the procedure for requesting a proclamation is different in each city, do not expect the timeline for applications to be the same. While some cities and counties request that the proclamation application be submitted 10 business days in advance of a regularly scheduled City Council meeting, others may ask for requests several weeks in advance. Be sure to give yourself and/ or your organization enough time to plan accordingly.

**Step 3. Gather all of the necessary paperwork and supporting documents.** In addition to the application form and the suggested proclamation language, some city and county councils ask that you provide background materials and/or other supporting documents on your issue. Provide any additional fact sheets or reports on the impact HIV and AIDS has had in your state or local community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov>) and AIDSVu (<http://aidsvu.org>) are great places to start.

**Step 4. Backup your application with specific stats on your city.** The health and rights of young people are important to your state and your city or county. It has a direct impact on the youth in your local schools, churches and community centers. How many young people are affected by HIV and AIDS in your state and/or county each year? Are there youth-friendly services in your neighborhood for young people to access medically accurate information about HIV and STI prevention? Take the time to pull out your top 3 or 4 key points on why it's important that NYHAAD be recognized in your community.

**Step 5. Get social.** It can take up to several weeks for your application to get reviewed by the City Council. This is the time to create buzz in your community about NYHAAD! [Click here](#) for ideas on exciting events and online campaigns to spread the word and put pressure on your city council to put young people at the forefront in your community.

## HOW TO GET A STATE RESOLUTION ON NYHAAD

**Step 1. Check to make sure your state is still in session.** Each state has a different timeline for their legislative session. Visit your state website to see the full calendar. To view all 2018 state legislative sessions, [click here](#).

**Step 2. Do your research.** State resolutions must be introduced by a member of your state legislature. Do some research on which state representatives and senators would be most likely to sponsor a resolution on NYHAAD. These legislators may have a record of supporting issues that directly impact young people and/or policies aimed at the reduction and prevention of HIV and AIDS and other STIs. Members of the House and Senate Health Committees are a good place to start.

**Step 3. Connect with state wide coalitions and community-based organizations.** Remember that legislators serve the community and the more support you have for a resolution the more likely a legislator will take it up. Connect with state and local based organizations that serve youth or work primarily on issues related to young people and/or HIV and AIDS education and prevention. Working in coordination with another organization or coalition increases your advocacy capacity and visibility in the community. Not sure which organizations are near you? Contact Sophia Kerby, Senior Manager, State & Local Campaigns, at [sophia@advocatesforyouth.org](mailto:sophia@advocatesforyouth.org).

**Step 4. Request a meeting with your legislator(s).** Once you have confirmed which legislators you want to reach out to and have connected with any ally organizations, request a meeting with the legislator's office to discuss the issue. Be sure to bring along background information on the issue and be clear about what your ask is: to sponsor a NYHAAD resolution. Have a draft resolution ready. After your first round of meetings follow up and continue to meet with legislators until you have confirmed sponsors. Keep in mind that legislators are more likely to respond to their constituents.

**Step 5. Lobby.** Your sponsor(s) knows the political landscape best - ask them how you can support the resolution and make a plan of action! This may require you to lobby. Start by emailing legislators about the resolution and soliciting their support. Follow up by calling and reminding them of the importance of the health and rights of young people to families in their districts and communities.

**Step 6. Get Social.** It can take up to several months to confirm a sponsor for your resolution and get it moved through committee. Use this time to communicate NYHAAD to a wider audience by taking actions to raise awareness of the impact that HIV and AIDS has on young people in your state. [Click here](#) for ideas on exciting events and online campaigns to spread the word and put pressure on your legislator to put young people at the forefront in your state. Remember it's best when online actions connect with on the ground actions, and vice versa.

**Step 7. Don't get discouraged.** Rarely are campaigns won overnight. If you're unable to get a resolution introduced and passed in the current legislative session do not get discouraged. Regroup to build more power and think through a variety of other strategies and tactics to use in the following legislative session. The important thing is to not lose sight of your end goal and get ready to hit the ground running next legislative session!

## SAMPLE PROCLAMATION / RESOLUTION LANGUAGE

A RESOLUTION to designate April 10, 2018, as “**National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day**” in **[name of city or state]**.

WHEREAS, National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day is a nationwide observance that calls on people to take action to invest in the health, education, and leadership of young people; and

WHEREAS, In the United States, almost 40 percent of new HIV infections are young people ages 13 to 20; and

WHEREAS, **[number]** young people of **[city or state]** are living with HIV and 60 percent of HIV positive youth across the country do not know they carry the HIV virus; and

WHEREAS, Youth activists and their allies will plan a variety of activities that foster awareness and stimulate action to support young people impacted by HIV and AIDS; and

WHEREAS, Young leaders and activists will come together to promote a message of prevention, treatment, care, and youth empowerment in various schools, churches, college campuses, and communities throughout the month of April; and

WHEREAS, National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day will provide a yearly date for all to hold leaders responsible for initiating and/or participating in local efforts to promote an AIDS-free generation; and

WHEREAS, to achieve an AIDS-free generation, we must prioritize youth leadership and development in order to ensure youth involvement in decisions which impact their health and well-being as well as advance a pipeline for the next generation of HIV/AIDS doctors, advocates, educators, researchers, and other professionals; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE **[name of governing body]** that we designate **April 10, 2018**, as National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day in **[city/state]**, and encourage all local residents to join in observing the day.

To view all state legislative sessions, [click here](#).