

resources

If you know someone who has AIDS, he or she needs your support. Be available to talk, to share feelings and resources and to reassure them of your continued friendship and love. AIDS information and services are available from the following resources:

Aid for AIDS: (213) 656-1107 (financial assistance)

AIDS Project/LA: (213) 876-8951

Hotlines: (213) 871-AIDS and
So. Calif. (toll free) 1-800-922-AIDS

National Public Service AIDS Hotline: 1-800-342-AIDS

Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center
of Los Angeles: (213) 464-CARE

San Diego AIDS Response Line: (619) 543-0300

Long Beach AIDS Program: (213) 427-7421, ext. 267

Hemophilia Foundation of Southern California:
(818) 793-6192

Shanti Foundation: (213) 273-7591 (counseling)

Tri-County AIDS Project (Santa Barbara, Ventura, SLO):
(805) 967-2311, ext. 455

Orange County AIDS Response Program:
(714) 534-0862; hotline: (714) 534-3261

Wholistic Health for Women: (213) 655-2126

Minority AIDS Project: (213) 936-4949

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays:
(213) 472-8952

Social Security AIDS Hotline: (213) 468-3023



about SCWU

Founded in June 1976, Southern California Women for Understanding is the nation's largest non-profit lesbian educational organization. As it enters its second decade, SCWU has a membership of nearly 900, with chapters and groups throughout southern California serving: Long Beach, Los Angeles, Orange County, Riverside/San Bernardino, San Diego County, the San Fernando Valley, the San Gabriel Valley, the Santa Monica/South Bay area, and Ventura County.

We are lesbians from all walks of life who seek in SCWU a common denominator in educational functions. We are lesbians who want a safe place to share our strengths, concerns, and resources with each other and who seek in SCWU support for our lifestyle. Our membership is composed of women who value and contribute to the community. Our aim is to eradicate negative stereotypical images of lesbians by example and through positive educational programs about our concerns, lifestyles, issues and lives.



**southern california
women for understanding**

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L E S B I A N S :

L O W
R I S K

F O R A I D S

H I G H

R I S K

F O R

D I S C R I M I N A T I O N

A PUBLICATION OF
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WOMEN
FOR UNDERSTANDING

low risk for AIDS

myth: AIDS is a homosexual disease, therefore lesbians are at high risk for AIDS.

fact: AIDS is not a homosexual disease. Although many gay men are at high risk, so are IV drug users, hemophiliacs, babies born of mothers who carry the AIDS virus, and persons with histories of venereal diseases and other medical conditions that have previously weakened their immune systems. No cases of AIDS sexually transmitted from lesbian to lesbian have been reported to date by the Centers for Disease Control.

myth: AIDS can be spread by casual contact and normal social interaction, e.g., gay restaurants, pools, spas, toilets, water fountains, or by sharing cups, glasses or eating utensils.

fact: AIDS is highly unlikely to be transmitted in these ways since the virus must enter the blood stream to become infectious.

myth: Lesbians don't/can't get AIDS.

fact: No cases of AIDS transmitted between lesbians have been reported to date. However, the following factors are likely to put lesbians at high risk:

1. Sharing needles when using IV drugs. This is the single most important risk factor for lesbians.
2. Having or having had repeated vaginal or anal intercourse with men who have been exposed to the virus, who have been actively gay or bisexual since 1979, men whose sexual history is unknown, men who use IV drugs, or men who are hemophiliac or who have received blood transfusions between 1979 and 1985.
3. Having received blood transfusions or blood products between 1979 and 1985.
4. Having been inseminated during the period from 1980 to March of 1985.

Based on the above, if you believe yourself to be at high risk, contact one of the resources on the back panel of this brochure.

myth: Quarantines and isolation of high-risk groups would effectively control the spread of AIDS.

fact: Health authorities agree that quarantine measures will not control the spread of AIDS since it is not contagious in the same manner as the diseases for which quarantines have been effective, e.g., small pox and tuberculosis. Therefore, current legislative proposals to isolate gays (California) and to disband gay businesses (Indiana) will neither control the spread of AIDS nor protect the public from infection.

myth: If a lesbian is not exposed to high-risk factors or high-risk groups, she does not have to be concerned about AIDS.

fact: Although a lesbian is likely to be at low risk for AIDS medically, she is at high risk for discrimination by virtue of her status as a homosexual.

high risk for discrimination

myth: Since lesbians are the lowest risk group for AIDS, they are exempt from the discrimination generated by fear of this disease.

fact: A recent UCLA study and *Los Angeles Times* poll showed that the public perceives lesbians to be in the same high-risk category as gay men. As a result, lesbians may be vulnerable to the same discrimination as their gay male counterparts.

myth: Legislative measures generated during the AIDS crisis won't affect lesbians.

fact: Right-wing forces, preying on public fear and homophobia, are attempting to recriminalize homosexuality. The widespread fear of AIDS is being used in efforts to pass municipal, state and federal legislation that is intended to reverse the significant human rights battles we have won in the last decade. As homosexuals, lesbians will be affected by these laws.

myth: Since lesbians are a low-risk AIDS group, discriminatory insurance practices won't affect them.

fact: There are already plans by some insurance companies to deliberately discriminate against broadly

defined health and life insurance client groups. For example, one national insurance company is moving to screen out clients whose lifestyles it decides may be at risk for AIDS. The company's profile of a high-risk individual is a single adult, between 20 and 50 years of age who resides in a large metropolitan area. It specifies *anyone who lives an "illicit lifestyle" and anyone who names someone other than a spouse or child as a beneficiary.* Other insurance companies are targeting areas densely populated with gay people for redlining. These overtly discriminatory practices will sharply affect heterosexuals and lesbians as well as gay males.

myth: With respect to the AIDS crisis, lesbians do not have to worry about being denied employment, housing or freedom to travel.

fact: The fear of AIDS has quickly become synonymous with the fear of homosexuality, potentially affecting the rights of both gay men and lesbians in areas of employment, housing and freedom to travel. Employers, landlords, officials, etc. who equate AIDS with homosexuality are likely to restrict rights and privileges of homosexuals of either gender.

myth: Once a cure for AIDS is discovered, everything will return to "normal."

fact: First, health officials do not expect that a cure for AIDS will be discovered during this century. Second, the AIDS crisis has created a climate of homophobia that will endure far beyond the AIDS epidemic. The fear of AIDS is being used by conservative factions to rekindle and fan the flames of homophobia and hatred that already exist.

Our educational efforts to dispel myths and present the facts about AIDS and homophobia will continue and increase. YOU can help by passing this brochure on to someone you know.*

*To order one copy, send a SASE to SCWU; send 10 cents for each additional copy. For orders of 25 or more, please include \$1.50 for shipping and handling.