



## COMMUNICATING ABOUT PREVENTION JUSTICE: FRAMES AND MESSAGES

We know that talking about Prevention Justice can be confusing. It is a broad term that includes a wide range of ideas about doing HIV prevention work, and we don't want you to feel overwhelmed.

So, we thought we'd give you some additional ways to talk about Prevention Justice in a way that is clear and concise. **Framing** and **messaging** are two complementary communication strategies that can be useful in talking about Prevention Justice or any other ideas we need to communicate across different groups.

You can use this for your media work or when talking to people as you're doing outreach for World AIDS Day and other events. Speakers at events should use shared frames and messages so people can see our unity. And, it's a good way to explain to others why they should endorse and get involved with the PJM.

**FRAMING:** A **frame** is a concept that explains that *one word or series of words* gives us a range of meanings that are much larger.



**Think of a picture of an eagle in a frame**, and the meanings that it will have for many of us who look at it – all of those meanings are found within the frame of the picture, even though they are not spelled out in the picture itself or in words.

Even the word *eagle*, for many of us in the United States, gives us a set of shared symbols and meanings. An eagle is a large bird that is seen as strong and powerful. As a symbol for our country, often it is depicted with a powerful beak, in a solitary pose, and/or in a high position overlooking land and water.

So how do we frame HIV prevention? To do that, we need to paint a picture of what it means to think about HIV/AIDS that is *different* than what many people think of it now, and that will help people also to join and support our efforts.

When people think about **HIV/AIDS**, we don't want them to think about people who are at fault for contracting the disease because they didn't wear condoms, had "gay sex," or were drug addicts.

We want them to think of the negligence of our government to protect its most vulnerable citizens.

We want them to make the connections between poverty, homelessness, violence, racism and homophobia as being the things that cause certain communities to have more HIV than others.

We also want to *inspire* them to join us, rather than having them feel *overwhelmed* by our challenges.



Prevention Justice paints a picture of the HIV/AIDS epidemic as not just about "behavior," but also about *social inequality* and *injustice*.

**Prevention Justice is a frame.** By linking the word "justice" to "prevention," we are calling forth a much larger concept that implies that there is injustice standing between us and successful HIV prevention efforts. Just using the term *prevention justice* in your discussions, visual images and materials for World AIDS Day or other events help to change the terms of the debate on HIV prevention.

Why is this important? Because, through effective framing, **we can create the social context that makes winning possible**. We can do this through our work with the media. Media includes not just the television, newspaper and radio, but also the materials we produce ourselves, like our newsletters, web pages and posters.

**Here's one of the great parts of framing** – even if people disagree with us and say that bringing about Prevention Justice is more complicated or harder than we think, they are still painting the picture that **Prevention Justice is possible**. That's the power of framing – people have to **respond** to our picture, meaning that **we are in control of the story**.

## OK, SO WHAT'S THE MESSAGE?

A message is what we actually say, print or show in our communications efforts around the PJM. But remember, we still have to keep it concise. Think of it like a *phone message* – if someone leaves a very long message on your voicemail, are you going to remember it all? You may not even listen to all of it!

All of our messages should fit *within* the Prevention Justice frame, just as a painting fits within its frame. So how do we do that?

## The first step of messaging is identifying **VALUES**

Effective frames start with **values**. Values are broad concepts that are widely felt by many people, even if we do not agree on the details of what it may mean to implement these values. So it allows people to begin to identify with what we are saying, and stick around to learn more. We encourage you to use the *value words* of the PJM when you talk about it with others:

We are a part of the PJM because we value *health, unity, justice and accountability*.

- ❖ We value **health** – the total physical, mental, sexual and spiritual well being of our communities, including people with HIV and those communities most impacted by the virus.
- ❖ We value the **unity** between communities most impacted by HIV/AIDS and unity between all organizations, domestically and abroad, fighting for Prevention Justice.
- ❖ We believe that people in power must be **accountable** for their role in policies that work for or against healthy communities, and that they are responsible for being a force of **justice**.

Our **PJM logo** represents these values – different shades of arms reaching together with their hands in fists – a picture of “**We're from different communities, unified in our demand for Prevention Justice.**”

To further this frame, we must speak with a **confident tone**. We are *united, knowledgeable and committed* people, **serious** and **committed** to *collaborating* together. Together, we are confronting our current situation and what the future may hold. We are creative and interesting people who are very different from each other, but *united in common cause* for Prevention Justice.



## The second step of messaging gives **CONTEXT**

We further the frame of Prevention Justice by speaking about the **challenges** we face and the **resources or lack of resources** we have for meeting the challenges of HIV prevention.

But a key to framing is that we *first* speak of familiar values *and* we must not go on and on about the challenges or we lose all but our best friends! We need to give a *brief, accurate, and inspiring snapshot* of Prevention Justice. That way we keep people's attention by **framing** a complicated story with a faster and general statement that summarizes all the details.

*For many years we have heard "it's not who you are, it's what you do" that can lead to HIV infection. But we now know that some people are more likely to become HIV positive than others, even if they have the same amount of so-called "risky behavior."*

**Prevention Justice** is a new way to think about HIV prevention. Too often, we only hear about being tested for HIV or wearing condoms as the only solution to protecting yourself from contracting the virus. HIV prevention efforts that target people's individual behavior **work**, but not for everybody all the time. Disease prevention is also about changing the **conditions** that allow for infectious diseases to spread. And that means that organizations and government must help communities change these conditions if we really want to end the epidemic."

## The third and final step of the message says **WHAT WE WANT**

Many of us know a lot about AIDS issues. But setting the frame first will give people who have less knowledge a *picture* of how to think about the details that we understand are important. Now that we have established that people with HIV and their supporters are smart, united, and confident in our ability to fight the epidemic through Prevention Justice, and that there is a problem because we are not getting the support we need, we can *bring it on home* with a simple statement of what we need. Again, we need to remember that we can't give a whole list of things or we will lose people.

We can highlight the **one or two** issues most vital where we live (housing, comprehensive sex ed, health care access, etc...) or continue to use compelling but more general statements:

*We need resources to expand HIV prevention options that work, research to find a broader range of HIV prevention programs and tools that will work for everyone, and real changes to end the injustice and inequities that make HIV/AIDS such a big problem in communities facing discrimination, stigma and poverty.*

**As a part of the PJM, you can use the Mobilization platform, frames and media tools to talk about local problems you are working to overcome. We gain power when we address local issues with shared solutions and by acting in concert with people all over the country, and around the world.**

Here is a **sample message** for Prevention Justice that addresses important legislation on sexuality education:

### VALUES

“We believe that our leaders should be accountable for the health of our nation....”

### CONTEXT

“But the United States lacks a national plan for fighting HIV/AIDS, and still funds harmful abstinence-only-until-marriage programs rather than supporting comprehensive sexuality education that works...”

### WHAT WE WANT

”So we are calling out for Prevention Justice, asking all presidential candidates and elected officials to pledge to end funding for these misleading programs and to instead support the REAL Act, which would provide honest, reality-based information to young people.”

Here’s another one that focuses on the **PJM** itself:

### VALUES

“As HIV prevention educators, we are united across communities to fight inequity that fuels this epidemic”

### CONTEXT

“Many people think of HIV prevention as a matter of individual behavior, but we know that the drastic differences in infection rates in people of color are not just because of risky acts. We have seen that social factors like lack of housing, less access to health care, and being in a tough financial situation also can make people vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

### WHAT WE WANT

”We are joining hundreds of people from around the country for the Prevention Justice Unity Rally in Atlanta on December 4 to tell the CDC and our leaders that we need *resources, research* and *real changes* to end the injustice and inequities that make HIV/AIDS such a big problem in our communities.”



## PREVENTION JUSTICE MESSAGES

Here are some more ways to “message” Prevention Justice, based on the four principles of the *Prevention Justice Endorsement Statement*.



### **IT'S NOT ONLY WHAT YOU DO, IT'S ALSO ABOUT WHO YOU ARE. HIV/AIDS ISN'T JUST A VIRUS – HIV/AIDS AS PROOF POSITIVE OF INJUSTICE.**

1. We are dealing with an epidemic in the U.S. that unfairly impacts certain groups – Blacks, Latino/as, homeless people, intravenous drug users, communities with high imprisonment rates, gay men and other men who have sex with men, women of color and transgender women.
2. When you have high rates of any disease in certain populations over others, you must address it at the *population* level as well as *individual* level. Studies have shown that many groups that have the highest rates of HIV, like Black women and black gay men, do *not* have riskier sex more often than other groups—and, in fact, they often have less sexual partners than other groups. Yet, they have more HIV. And we know there are other things that affect a group's vulnerability to HIV risk—such as homelessness, high rates of incarceration, domestic and other gender-based violence, lack of adequate access to high-quality health care and a living wage or income.
3. When there's a cholera outbreak, you don't blame people for drinking bad water! You treat the people who contracted the disease, and then you clean the water supply. We need to do the same with HIV. We have to stop blaming people for their behaviors, and do what is necessary to ensure that everyone with HIV gets the treatment they need and individuals get access to the best prevention information and strategies. But we also need to change the environments that lead to disparities in disease.



**THERE'S NO SECRET CONSPIRACY TO GIVE PEOPLE HIV.  
IT'S RIGHT IN THE OPEN. HERE'S WHAT'S GIVING PEOPLE HIV:**

1. There have been no significant increases in funding for HIV prevention in many years, and we have seen outright cuts to some programs. The CDC back peddled this year on its own plan to cut new HIV infections by half in 5 years. They cut that number to a measly 10%. Although their goal may not have been realistic, backing away from an ambitious goal is dangerous. We demand significant investment to cut new infections.
2. Since 1987, there continue to be 40,000 new infections every year in the U.S., but we still have *no national AIDS strategy* to deal with this. In fact, the incidence rate (number of people getting infected every year) is likely higher, and CDC may announce a higher number right around World AIDS Day. It took our government *years* to respond to the epidemic, and they continue to play politics with people's lives by not scaling up effective HIV prevention and by not looking harder for other ways to prevent HIV.
3. The Federal government has a complete ban on funding for syringe exchange. There is no scientific or public health debate about the effectiveness of syringe access. The only reason we don't have federally funded syringe exchange: politics and misplaced priorities. We know from research in United States and other countries that syringe access dramatically reduces HIV infection without increasing drug use. Also, we know that African American and Latino/a drug users are up to 20 times as likely to have HIV as white drug users – probably because they feel unsafe carrying their own needles due to racial profiling by police and thus are forced to share.
4. There is an unstated "gag rule" on harm reduction. Even though CDC recommends and funds prevention programs that use harm reduction (non-abstinence-based) strategies, CDC and other parts of the government are telling people they cannot use the term "harm reduction" in their proposals for funding or in their progress reports.
5. Even though scientific evidence shows that *comprehensive sex education* is effective in reducing the risk behavior of youth, Congress voted this year to continue funding abstinence-only programs and still hasn't passed the REAL Act, which would fund *comprehensive sex ed.* Abstinence-only programs (we don't call it "education" because there is so much *misinformation* in many programs) have been shown to increase risky sexual behavior in young people who are sexually active. We're demanding leadership that is brave enough to put science above politics.



**INVOLVE COMMUNITIES IN RESEARCH AND MONITORING:  
DON'T BLAME US OR SHAME US FOR WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW.**

1. Sometimes when a media story comes up about HIV prevention challenges or rumors (“the down low,” “bug chasers,” “youth think they’re invulnerable”), the fingers point at prevention programs or the AIDS community itself... and sometimes we then point the figure to individuals in our community or other communities, shaming or blaming them for their “denial” or “apathy.” But we don’t have to perpetuate stigma or blame when the truth is that we do not have the answers we need. We need ethical, well-designed research that prioritizes the prevention challenges in our communities.
2. There are too many unknowns about why certain groups have more HIV than others. And yet, we still lack the kind of research on individual and population-based interventions that will work for those communities that are most impacted. *In fact, HIV prevention research has been almost completely eliminated in the United States.* All the research used to justify CDC’s acceptable programs for community prevention (the DEBs) shows short-term reduction in “risk acts”... but doesn’t actually measure if *incidence* (the number of people becoming infected) goes down. That kind of research takes money and coordination, and must be a priority developed with community participation and oversight.
3. We know how to assess risk at the individual level and offer counseling and support, but we have no tools for assessing or changing social factors that can increase or decrease risk. Research must be designed to give us these answers.
4. The AIDS epidemic, and the community response to it, have been different than any other disease – and it has worked. We have stood up for the inclusion of people with HIV and affected communities at all levels of planning and delivering programs, and have changed the ways that the public and private sectors deal with a health condition. The realities of the lives of people in our communities must be at the forefront of research priorities. And in order for communities to help shape and improve research and tracking in HIV/AIDS, we need full information on planning and programs.

## Message Discipline

Simply put, if we have a message, we must use it over and over, whenever we communicate to the media. Here are some ideas about using messages:

### **Message essentials**

Messages capture action, advocacy, and political positions. *What are you advocating, which side of the argument do you support, whose interests are at stake?* Your message communicates your frame, position, and call for action – all at once, before you lose people’s attention!

### **Condense your issue into key messages**

Your message must be concise. You do not have to cover every policy nuance or expound on social history in your messages – save these details for your background materials. Your message should capture the essence of the issue at hand in the most accessible way possible.

### **Repeat your messages - over and over**

Every talk you give to a community group, every interview you give to the press, every letter and press release you write all must include your key messages.

### **Respond with reporters’ questions with key messages**

Do not **answer** a reporter’s questions, **respond** to them. This means that we should look at every question as another opportunity to communicate your message regardless of what the reporter is asking. This takes practice, and is a great way to figure out if your message works.

### **Use messages to direct the interview**

In an interview with a reporter, the reporter may be familiar with a different frame on your issue, or be interested in exploring an issue that is not central to your message. Use your message to *anchor* the interview and you will be better able to steer it in the direction you want.

### **Stay “on message”**

Discipline the message; do not get pulled off the message. This is not as easy as it sounds. No matter how outrageous the opposition gets, remember to stay calm, keep your discipline, and bring the focus back to your message – practice this inside your group before you go public!

### **Many messengers, one message**

No one can get out a message alone. People should see the same message in op-eds and in letters to the editor, hear it in public service announcements, and watch it on the evening news.



## **BUT THERE'S ALREADY A WORLD AIDS DAY EVENT WHERE I LIVE: HOW TO INTEGRATE THE PREVENTION JUSTICE MESSAGE**

Since one of the values of the PJM is *unity*, we certainly don't recommend starting a competing World AIDS Day event where you live!

Getting involved with the planning of a long-standing local event is a great way to respectfully publicize the PJM principles. You could hand out the Endorsement Statement at a planning meeting and invite individuals and organizations to join you in endorsing.

Can there be one Prevention Justice speaker added to the event? And/or you could meet with the speakers to explain prevention justice, ask for their perspective, and invite them to integrate the frames and messages into their words.

Would it be possible to have a Prevention Justice strategy brunch the day after World AIDS Day? You could publicize it before and during the World AIDS Day event, and plan for a smaller but focused discussion about how to bring a Prevention Justice perspective to local efforts in 2008.

On [www.PreventionJustice.org](http://www.PreventionJustice.org), you can find a sign-up sheet you could use to table at a World AIDS Day or other event that asks people to become endorsers. We can also send you Prevention Justice stickers! Stickers event participants is a good way to create a visual image of unity around Prevention Justice.

You can also refer to our prop-making section for ideas about signs and banners that can bring the Prevention Justice message to different events.



## THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE EVENTS: FOCUSED GOALS AND MESSAGES

If we don't know what our goals are, we have no way to measure our progress. Yet when it comes to events, we often lack goals or a clear message. We may have objectives ("100 people will come to our rally"), but *what are we trying to achieve by having a particular event?*

**Our most effective events will have focused goals and messages.**

**Focused goal:** What **impact** do you want your event to have? You may have more than one goal.

*The faith community forum may aim to **build alliances (goal)** with religious leaders and move religious leaders to **organize (goal)** PJM working groups at their church.*

*You may also want **media coverage (goal)** of the event that spreads the focused message of African American church leaders joining the fight to end AIDS.*

**Focused message:** What do you want people to **understand** or **know** when they leave?

*At an outreach forum for faith leaders, they will walk away convinced that **HIV/AIDS is an issue that their church should address with their members; they should present a Prevention Justice sermon** and be committed to spreading this understanding.*

The last section gave some models and suggestions for messaging. Now let's talk about **goals**. Goals for events can include:

**Outreach** Increase people's awareness of the mobilization.

**Education** Teach people about important issues.

**Accountability** Put key decision makers or influential leaders on the spot and force them to take a stand on key issues.

**Networking** Create space for people to meet and learn about each other.

**Open Dialogue** Generate conversation in a community or group, or between different communities or groups.

**Mobilize** Bring together large numbers of people to show support, like a rally or town meeting.

**Organize** Move people to engage in collective action.

**Alliance-Building** Bridge different groups or communities that do not usually work together

**Momentum-Building** Build on PJM activities to increase excitement about your mobilization.

**Media Attention** Attract press coverage

**Fundraising** Generate funds for your organization or effort.

**Direct Action** Confront decision-makers or directly interact with a specific policy (such as setting up a one-hour needle exchange to show how the city is *not* taking action to prevent HIV infection among drug users and their partners, or having a sit-in in the mayor's office because she is cutting the housing budget.)

But how do we know if we are meeting our goals? Well, our goals should be **SMART**:

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ime specific

**Examples:**

- We want to have 20 faith-based leaders from communities highly affected by HIV/AIDS attend a meeting, endorse the PJM, sign a pledge to preach about HIV/AIDS in the pulpit, and agree to have a PJM organizer present about the mobilization after services with the aim to start a PJM working group at their church.
- An event with an open dialogue goal could be held as a community roundtable where 10 people of different races, ages, gender and sexual orientation talk about how HIV is proof of injustice in their community, and set the goal of 50 people in the audience. But beforehand, the sponsoring organizations could poll their staff, members and volunteers about what questions they want to ask, as a way to increase their interest in attending. A charismatic person who is known to many groups could take to the audience Oprah-style to encourage dialogue between the audience and participants, and s/he can be sure to repeat the call to action of calling the Governor to advocate for more funds for innovative HIV prevention programs across communities.
- If media coverage is a goal, identify which media outlets you want to cover your event and the specific message you want them to cover. (See *Media Skills and Strategies* for information on how to achieve this goal.)