



TEN THINGS ANYONE CAN DO TO HELP END HIV CRIMINALIZATION

1. Get connected. Stay informed. Take action.

Join the Positive Justice Project (PJP) to receive regular updates, action alerts, new resources, and to participate in membership strategy calls. To join, email programassociate@hivlawandpolicy.org. You can also follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#). Once you sign up, you can e-mail your friends, family, and colleagues to invite them to sign up, too. Tell them why you are involved, and ask them to join you.

2. Connect with PJP State Advocacy Groups

PJP works with advocates around the country on state and local issues. You can participate in your state's modernization efforts, community outreach, community education, coalition building, and other advocacy work. PJP's State Advocacy Working Group works with local advocates to develop strategies to modernize criminal laws and prosecution policies that target people with HIV. If you are interested in joining the State Advocacy Working Group or your state's HIV criminalization advocacy group, email programassociate@hivlawandpolicy.org.

3. Build relationships with elected representatives and other policy makers

Call or meet with your state elected representatives well before the legislative session starts and discuss your concerns. It is usually a good idea to bring them something short and in writing with your key points and contact information. By simply introducing yourself to your legislators and their staff before the session starts, and providing a brief overview of HIV criminalization policy concerns, you can establish useful relationships with them. You will then be in a better place to help legislators see the value of supporting bills to end or "modernize" HIV criminalization laws. When the session starts, they may reach out to you because they know you are actively involved in this issue.

4. Reach out to the media

Call or email reporters, editors, producers, and others in the media to help them understand HIV criminalization and how inaccurate or sensationalized reporting perpetuates stigma and erroneous beliefs about HIV and HIV-specific prosecutions. Keep it short, accurate and to the point. Refer them to resources that support your points.

5. Become more knowledgeable about HIV criminalization – and spread the word

The Center for HIV Law and Policy's online [Resource Bank](#) is a free and large collection of memos, research, fact sheets, legal guides, cases, court decisions, policy analysis and other materials on dozens of topics that matter to people living with HIV. We have hundreds of materials on HIV criminalization and the Positive Justice Project. [In The Life Media](#) also made several short videos on [HIV criminalization](#), including one focused

on women. Spend some time learning more about the issues, and then share resources or video links with your friends, family, and community members.

6. Engage allies in addressing HIV-specific laws and prosecutions

HIV criminalization is not just an HIV issue. It has an unjust effect on people of color and immigrants in particular, including women, and triggers a host of other problems for those who are targeted and their families. However, we still have to reach out to local and national LGBT, civil rights, racial justice, immigration, religious, reproductive rights, women, and people of color groups to show them why HIV criminalization is an issue that affects their members or communities. Educate your family, friends, colleagues, and community organizations about the legal, housing, immigration, public health, family, and community disruption caused by HIV criminalization. Tell them why you are involved, and ask them to join you.

7. Educate local police and law enforcement

A substantial number of HIV-specific criminal charges arise from incidents involving law enforcement professionals, including biting or spitting an officer during an arrest. Urge your local police department to distribute The Center for HIV Law and Policy's resources, including [Spit Does Not Transmit](#), to help educate officers on HIV. Think about partnering with other advocates and health care providers to offer trainings on HIV-related issues for your local police department.

8. Educate local prosecutors

Most HIV-specific prosecutions involve conduct that poses little to no risk of transmission, and few cases involve actual transmission. Despite these facts, prosecutors continue to use a suspect's HIV status for criminal charges, sentence enhancements, or leverage in plea-bargaining.

Prosecutors have broad discretion on whether to charge a suspect and in selecting specific charges. Therefore, prosecutors should be educated on the basic science of HIV to avoid unfounded fears and prosecutions, and the terrible impact on individuals, families, and communities caused by criminalization. Offer to work with your local district attorney's office to train its staff on the basic science, transmission risks, and current day realities of life with HIV, and be sure to bring along people whom prosecutors will respect – especially medical professionals and religious leaders. Also urge your local district attorney's office to use The Center for HIV Law and Policy's resources, including [Transmission Routes, Viral Loads and Relative Risks: The Science of HIV for Lawyers and Advocates](#) and [Routes, Risks And Realities Of HIV Transmission And Care: Current Scientific Knowledge And Medical Treatment](#).

9. Share Resources

In addition to using The Center for HIV Law and Policy's [Resource Bank](#) to educate yourself and others about HIV criminalization, you should also make sure that the [charts](#), [fact sheets](#), [toolkits](#), [palm cards](#) and other resources are shared with health care providers, social workers, case managers, community leaders, and community organizations. Getting copies of these useful resources to as many individuals and organizations as possible will help with your advocacy and outreach effort.

Organizations and community advocates may be able to share these resources with larger networks and individuals who are at risk of prosecution.

10. Host a community educational event

You, your friends or a group you belong to can host an event to educate people about HIV criminalization in your state. PJP's State Advocacy Working Group has helped organize educational community forums in many states, and can assist with much of what you need to get a group started in your area. If you would like to collaborate with PJP on a community event, email programassociate@hivlawandpolicy.org.

CHLP encourages the broad use of this material. Please credit the source.