

Section 1: Determining the Scope

The first step in preparing an HIV/AIDS epidemiologic profile is to determine its scope. The scope should be broad enough to provide planning groups with the information and background data they need to identify and set priorities among HIV/AIDS prevention and care services. At the same time, the scope needs to be narrow enough to meet specific requirements of prevention and care programs.

The appropriate scope of the epidemiologic profile depends on several factors outlined in this section.

CDC and HRSA Considerations

Although the data required are similar, CDC and HRSA have different requirements for developing and updating the HIV/AIDS epidemiologic profile. Below are several suggestions:

- Every year, the health department should update the executive summary and core epidemiologic data—including tables and figures—to ensure that planning groups can identify and set priorities among populations and their prevention and care needs.
- Less often, the health department should comprehensively revise its epidemiologic profile. CDC prevention planning groups should complete such a revision at a minimum of once every 5 years. CARE Act planning consortia and councils should follow their yearly program guidance from the HIV/AIDS Bureau.

Consider including as much as possible of the sociodemographic and socioeconomic information covering the entire service area. Updated profiles will then need to include only the data from those areas in which significant changes have occurred.

Factors Affecting the Scope

Scope refers to the boundaries, such as the time frame and geographic area, which define the extent of information in your profile. Determining the scope of your epidemiologic profile is a **collaborative** effort that requires consultation **with your planning groups and other potential stakeholders**.

Because each jurisdiction's needs differ, it is not possible to say how much time or how many resources should be allotted to complete an epidemiologic profile. The scope of your profile will affect the time and resources needed to complete it. It will be important to factor the time and resources needed into the planning process.

The following is a checklist of questions to guide your data gathering and analysis. Your answers will enable you to determine

- the geographic boundaries of the area described in your profile
- the extent to which the profile can address the core epidemiologic questions
- any special considerations pertinent to your service area and planning group requirements
- the time and resources needed to complete the profile

Checklist for Determining the Scope of an Epidemiologic Profile

- ✓ Is the profile a comprehensive epidemiologic profile or an annual update?
- ✓ What planning jurisdiction(s) or service area(s) should be included?
- ✓ What specific questions for prevention and care planning should be addressed by this profile?
Examples
 - special needs of populations at risk of becoming infected with HIV
 - trends in the epidemic that can be identified through a comparison of HIV and AIDS prevalence data
 - setting priorities for prevention and care services among prioritized populations
- ✓ What resources—time, personnel, and funds—are available to develop the profile?
- ✓ What sources of information are needed to answer the profile's epidemiologic questions?
Example
 - If your service area does not have HIV reporting, you will need to use estimates of HIV prevalence derived from AIDS case reporting.
- ✓ What data are available to supplement the HIV/AIDS Reporting System data that describe the HIV-positive population?
- ✓ What information is already available? More information, which is readily available, may allow for a broader scope.