



Risk Communication and Community Engagement, Mitigating Stigma and Discrimination: Lessons from HIV/AIDS

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PRESS RELEASE

UNAIDS warns that stigmatizing language on Monkeypox jeopardises public health

Global Media Coverage of Monkeypox is Rooted in Racism, Homophobia

Monkeypox-fueled hate echoes the HIV/AIDS era, even in rainbow cities

AIDS Echoes in Monkeypox Messages Worry LGBTQ Health Advocates

Blame and shame are harming our response to monkeypox

Old stigmas are hampering how we understand, talk about, and respond to monkeypox.

Opinion | We're making the same mistake with monkeypox that we made with HIV/AIDS

Monkeypox: Avoiding the Mistakes of Past Infectious Disease Epidemics

Lessons learned from HIV:

1. No singular community is exclusively at risk for disease.
2. Focus on *how* disease is transmitted, not *who* transmits it.
3. Stigma, blame and shame undermine outbreak response.
4. Ensure an equitable response.
5. Language is important.
6. Images are important.



[Daskalakis D, et al. Monkeypox: Avoiding the Mistakes of Past Infectious Disease Epidemics. Ann Intern Med. August 2022.](#)

[WHO's Risk communication and community engagement \(RCCE\) for monkeypox outbreaks, June, 2022.](#)

[CDC's Reducing Stigma in Monkeypox Communication and Community Engagement, July 2022.](#)

[CDC'S Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication, Dec 2021.](#)

Non-stigmatizing language:

- » **Do talk about monkeypox or the monkeypox virus and communities most affected.**

- » **Don't attach labels of particular demographics to the disease. For example, monkeypox is not a 'gay' disease. Take care to note that anyone in contact with the virus can become infected.**

- » **Do talk about the behaviors that can lead to acquiring or contracting monkeypox if the virus has entered social networks.**

- » **Don't talk about people spreading monkeypox or infecting others, as it implies that someone is doing this intentionally.**

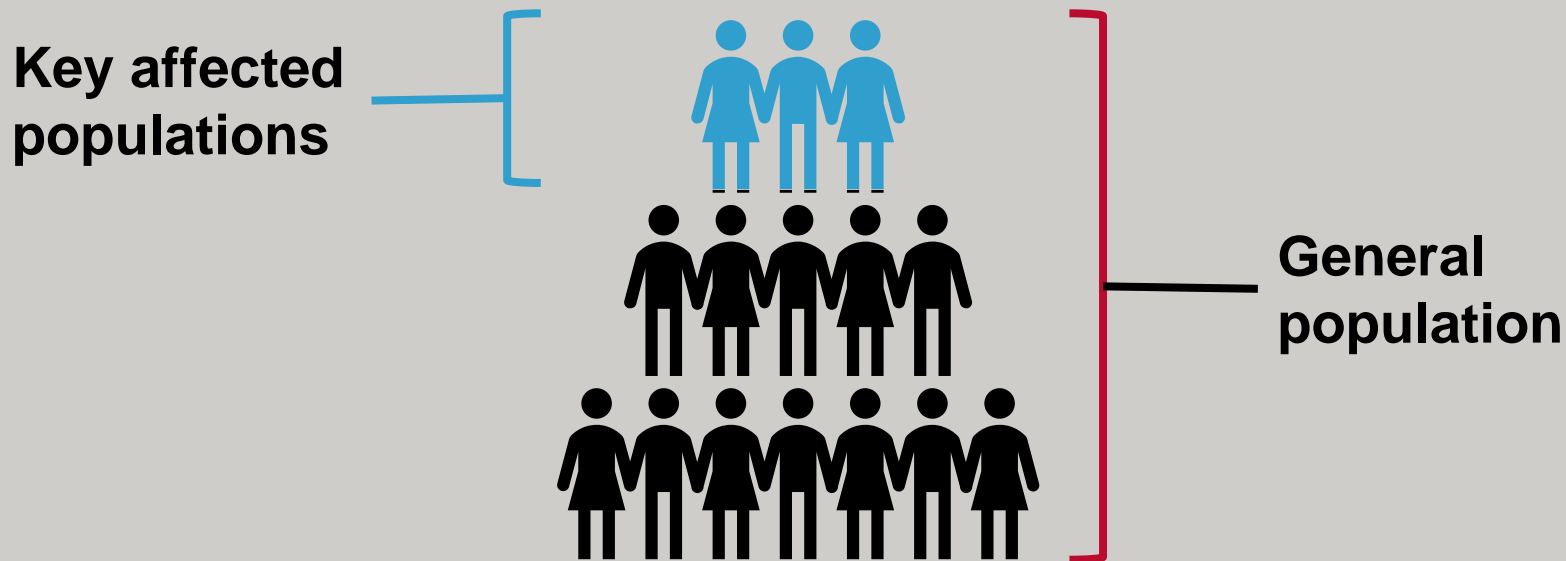
- » **Do emphasize that everyone who has close contact with someone who is infectious is at risk of monkeypox.**

- » **Don't imply that only men who have sex with men are at risk.**

- » **Do focus on patterns we are currently seeing in the data, for example, 'Many of the cases we are currently seeing are in communities of men who have sex with men'.**

- » **Don't imply that those who identify as gay or bisexual are inherently more at risk, or apply moral judgements or assumptions about people's sex lives.**

Two-tiered RCCE approach:



General audiences, including household contacts of MPX cases:

- MPX is a public health issue relevant to everyone
- MPX can be acquired by all people, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation
- Provide information about what MPX is, how it spreads, encourage seeking healthcare if symptoms

Sexually active MSM, sex workers:

- Identify targeted channels to directly reach this audience –websites, dating apps
- Message across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, geographic backgrounds
- Provide non-alarmist, fact-based messaging that provides tools people need to protect themselves and others
- Target venues where skin-to-skin contact is likely (large-scale events, massage parlors, spas, saunas, sex clubs)

[Chris Akolo, EpiC/FHI 360, personal communication.](#)

[CDC's Reducing Stigma in MPX communication and community engagement, Dec 2021.](#)

[WHO's Risk communication and community engagement \(RCCE\) for monkeypox outbreaks, June 24, 2022.](#)

1

Engage Community:

- Work directly with affected groups – LGBTQIA, MSM, CSWs....
- Discuss household contact risk among contacts of cases
- Engage CSOs, CBOs, community leaders to message specific audiences, local contexts
- Use culturally-appropriate language and communication channels

2

Engage Media:

- Media engagement is critical to combating myths and misconceptions, and avoiding stigmatization
- Train media, social media, community influencers to provide accurate information and address stigmatizing language

3

Engage Healthcare Providers:

- Engage HCW networks to educate, advise about MPX case definitions, strategies for contact tracing
- Train HCWs about occupational risks of MPX infection
- Address **discrimination within healthcare settings**, directed towards marginalized/stigmatized groups (PLHIV, MSM); may reflect discriminatory laws, policies
- Monitor health service user experiences; **educate HCWs to provide discrimination-free healthcare**

RCCE / MPX Resources:



Risk communications and community engagement interim guidance on using inclusive language in understanding, preventing and addressing stigma and discrimination related to monkeypox

1 September 2022

https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/emergencies/final-rcce-interim-guidance-on-using-inclusive-language-to-address-stigma-and-discrimination-1-september-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=b5749547_1&download=true

Interim advice on Risk Communication and Community Engagement during the monkeypox outbreak in Europe, 2022

Joint report by WHO Regional office for Europe/ECDC

www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/interim-advice-risk-communication-and-community-engagement-during-monkeypox

July 2022

Reducing Stigma in Monkeypox Communication and Community Engagement

How CDC is Framing Communication Around Monkeypox

www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/pdf/monkeypox_stigma_508.pdf

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