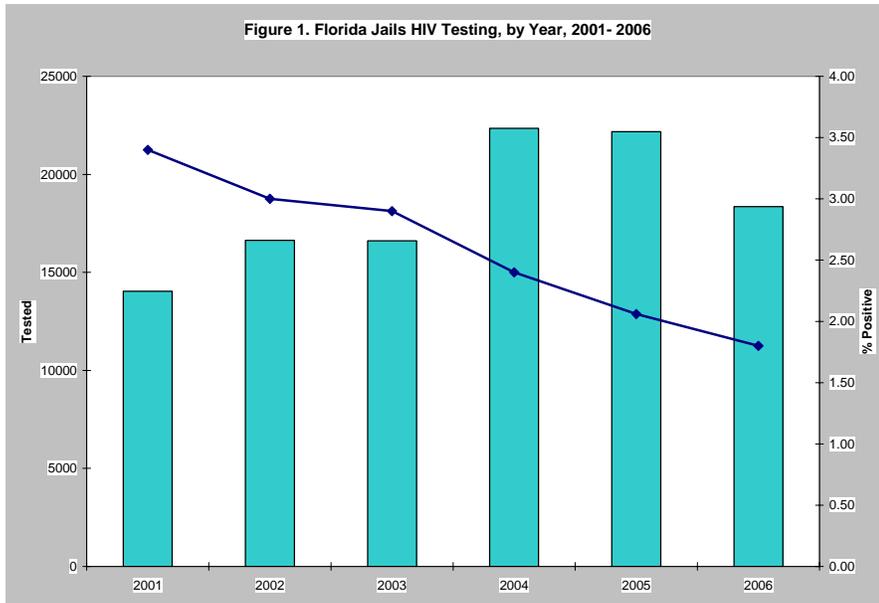


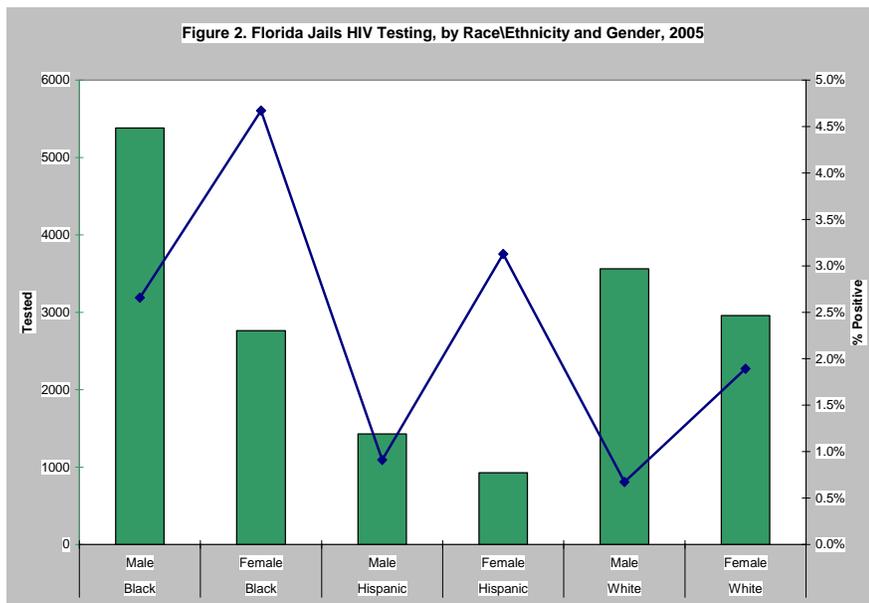
HIV Testing in Florida's County Jails

During the past six years, the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of HIV/AIDS has implemented programs in prisons and jails to enable inmates to know their HIV status, to receive HIV/Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Tuberculosis and hepatitis education, and to be linked to services if tested HIV positive.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) initiative, "A Heightened National Response to the HIV/AIDS crisis among African Americans" is anticipated to invest more funds in jail testing programs during the next few years. The initiative calls for 1) expanding the reach of prevention services; 2) increasing opportunities for diagnosing and treating HIV; 3) developing new, effective prevention interventions; and 4) mobilizing broader community action.

According to the Department of Corrections website, there were an average daily total of 65,241 inmates in Florida's county jail facilities during September 2006. This number includes 55,832 adult males (85.6%), 8,764 adult females (13.4%), 628 juvenile males (1.0%) and 17 juvenile females (0.0%). The percentage distribution by sex has remained constant in county jails for the past several years.



The number of publicly funded HIV tests in the county jails increased from 14,401 in 2001 to a high of 22,352 in 2004 (figure 1). The number of tests for 2006 was 18,358. This decrease is due in large part to the termination of a CDC funded rapid testing project and a change in the jail medical provider leading to a temporary disruption of testing in another urban jail. The positivity rate in jails has decreased since 2001. A decline in HIV positivity rates is to be expected, as persons who test positive have little reason to be retested.

Figure 2 shows testing among males and females by racial/ethnic group in 2005. Black males were tested in the largest numbers, followed by white males. Black females had the highest positivity rates, followed by Hispanic females. Overall HIV positivity rates were nearly twice as high among females (3.0%) than among males (1.6%).

Providing HIV/STD testing, prevention and linkage services in county jails is an integral part of our comprehensive program to decrease new infections and to improve the quality of life for those infected. County jails and their surrounding communities are linked in many ways. It is critical to implement and maintain programs that seamlessly cross the walls.