A photograph of four people standing on a balcony, viewed from behind. They are holding onto a metal railing. The person on the far left has a white plus sign on their back. The person next to them has a white minus sign. The person next to that has a white equals sign. The person on the far right has a white question mark. The entire image has a red color overlay.

VOX

INVESTIGATES

HIV, AIDS AND ATLANTA TEENS

SHAKE THE STIGMA

DEAR READERS



As some of you know, VOX recently rebranded itself and reconstructed our entire program so we may best represent the voices of Atlanta's teenagers. Along with this reconstruction was the birth of the VOX Investigates team.

This team of teenagers took a semester-long journey into stories to produce print media, videos, audio stories, open dialogue sessions, photography and other journalistic platforms. The fall semester was dedicated to creating content that pertains to how HIV and AIDS plays a role within the city of Atlanta. We selected this topic due to the fact that the HIV and AIDS rates in Atlanta are reaching an all-time high. We are very gracious toward the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and the Elton John AIDS Foundation for funding special coverage.

Everyone on the team, the teens and their mentors, have been working diligently to create the issue you are holding, plus more content you can find online at voxatl.com. Through the process of shaping these stories, the entire team faced challenges with securing interviews, giving multiple perspectives of situations and long hours of research.

While researching our topics, we discovered a great amount of information about HIV and AIDS we did not know before. As the intern, I have been able to watch each teen develop a new set of interviewing skills, communicate with their mentors and each other, and learn so many new facts about HIV and AIDS.

This issue features stories that tackle topics such as HIV within the transgender community, access to HIV testing, HIV and AIDS in pop culture, myths and truths, profiles of people impacted by HIV, and more. We are also publishing regularly online. We hope everyone reading our special coverage walks away with a deeper knowledge of how HIV and AIDS play a role in the city we call our home. Read the complete story about how HIV and AIDS affects Atlanta's teenagers at voxatl.com/category/vox-investigates/.

Thank you,
Sharah Hutson, VOX Investigates Teen Intern

VOX INVESTIGATES FALL 2015 SUPPORT



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HIV Q&A

Widely known
but not widely
understood

By **Jahleelah Shaheed**
VOX Investigates

In sex-education classes, teens learn HIV is a virus that, if untreated, develops into AIDS, and the best way to prevent contracting it is to practice safe sex or not have sex at all. In most cases, I find that's the extent of the information taught on the subject, leaving many in the dark to what HIV truly is. To help teens understand the virus, I interviewed Dr. Carlos del Rio, co-director of the Emory Center for AIDS Research, about what HIV actually is.

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is spread by bodily fluids (excluding saliva) through unprotected sex and sharing drug equipment, such as needles. The virus is incurable, and if not treated, can lead to acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

HIV is classified as a lentivirus. What is a lentivirus, and why is HIV classified as one?

A lentivirus is a virus that can stay in the body for extensive periods of time. Lentiviruses, including HIV, do this by meshing their DNA or RNA with our own.

How is HIV transmitted from person to person?

HIV is transferred primarily through sexual contact, [or] contact with infected secretions. What people don't realize is that you need

to have contact with somebody who is HIV-infected and who is not on therapy [i.e. taking daily medications], because if somebody is on therapy [and has an undetectable viral load] then they are not transmitting. But if somebody is HIV-infected and is not on therapy, then they have detectable virus in their genital secretions. It can also be transmitted because you got exposed to blood.

Do we know why HIV attacks the immune system?

HIV ... targets the immune system cells, what we call the CD4 cells. It attaches and multiplies in those sites, and when it does that, it also kills them. It starts a process called programmed cell death, and it causes them to kill themselves.

How does HIV affect the body, and how does it weaken the immune system?

HIV damages the body by destroying the immune system.

Can HIV cause any observable physical changes?

HIV, itself, does not; the infection associated with HIV [does]. The vast majority of people with HIV, who are not sick, have the virus in their blood and don't know it. You can't tell if somebody has HIV just from looking at them.

Once someone is diagnosed as having AIDS, can they go back to just being HIV-positive with the aid of medication, or is it permanent?

No one is just HIV-positive. Once you have the virus, it is multiplying. We can give you therapy and suppress the virus in your blood, and you won't have the infection or disease, but you will still have HIV.

Is HIV a terminal illness?

HIV is not a death sentence [with proper treatment] but is a life sentence. You will be in therapy for the rest of your life. You will need to take drugs for the rest of your life.

Do we have any idea as to why HIV is currently incurable?

Well, it is incurable because it incorporates itself into the genetic material, and therefore



COMIC BY MIKAEL TRENCH | VOX STAFF

it integrates into the cell. So the challenge to create a cure is, "How do we extract that?" We've never been able to do that.

How do medications suppress the virus?

What the medications primarily do is interfere with the virus replication [when the virus copies itself to grow in numbers]. They control the virus, but they don't cure it.

Do you have anything to say to teens who believe

HIV doesn't/won't affect them?

HIV is real. HIV continues to infect millions of people around the world. There are still, in many communities, people getting infected every day and we should not take it lightly. HIV is a real disease and a real infection and it kills people.

Jahleelah, 15, is (presumably) a human being who attends Creekside High School and is passionate about art.

D'JONA, 19

YOUTH HIV
POLICY ADVISER

"I was born with HIV, but I didn't know until I was 15. In 10th grade I caught pneumonia and got really sick. My legs swelled up, and I couldn't breathe, eat or sleep. We went to the doctor, and they rushed me to the hospital. I passed out in the ambulance and woke up a couple days later ... with tubes in my chest and mouth.

If I had waited to go to the hospital for a few more days, I would have died. My mom told me I had something I would have to live with for the rest of my life and take medicine for, but I could still live a happy, normal life. I thought I had a heart disease.

At a follow-up appointment there were four doctors sitting around a big, round table. They asked if I was aware of my status and I said yes, still thinking I had a heart disease. And then they asked if I was aware that I was HIV-positive and I lied and said yes, but in my head I wanted to break down and cry.

I tried to take the pills for a week, but I got nauseous and dizzy so I stopped taking them. I was in and out of school, and then my house got robbed. My dad thought I set it up so he kicked me out. For a week, my friend and I stayed in abandoned apartments.

"My friend had me stay with someone she knew, but after a week my friend called the girl I was staying with and told her I had AIDS. Her family started being really mean to me: Everything I touched was either thrown away or bleached. I had my own plastic silverware. I had to sleep on the floor, and if they washed my

clothes they had to bleach them.

"Finally, I couldn't take it. I called a good friend and stayed with her for a good two months. During that time, my friend [the girl who had me stay with someone she knew] got angry at me and posted on Facebook that I had AIDS and was passing it around to other people. A hundred people saw her post, but I didn't know about it. A couple days later, I went to school and had random people coming up to me asking if I had AIDS and telling me they heard I was sleeping with people and infecting them.

"High school was horrible. I was bullied at school, at home and online. No matter where I went, people were telling me I should die and that people like me shouldn't be alive.

"I tried to kill myself a few times. My dad put me in a mental asylum for a week and a half. I was 18, and the youngest person there, besides me, was 30.

"It was at the asylum that I realized I wanted to do right and go back to school. There was this prayer on the wall in the

asylum called the Serenity Prayer. I still remember to this day the moment that I saw it and how it made me feel.

"I knew there was God somewhere, and I wanted to find him and figure things out. I got in touch with my faith and started to feel a little better about myself. I went back to school. At first, it was difficult because I felt like all eyes were on me, but after a while it didn't matter. I wanted to get my education so I could continue to be a better person.

"I ended up graduating high school in 2014. Now I am in school for communications at Liberty University. This is just the beginning: I plan to continue in school until I get my Ph.D. Most of all, I aim to be a motivational speaker and role model for the disabled, LGBTQ and those living with HIV [and] AIDS."

*Read more portraits of HIV on page 14.
Photo and story by Lizzie Likness, VOX Investigates.*

**HIV REALTALK
DEBUNKING THE MYTHS**

MYTH
HIV is a disease that only affects the LGBT community.

REALITY
HIV doesn't discriminate: It is a human immunodeficiency virus.

MYTH
Teens who become sexually active will become infected with HIV.

REALITY
Anyone who is sexually active will have a higher risk of contracting HIV if they don't use a condom.

MYTH
HIV can be spread through eating after, kissing or hugging someone with HIV.

REALITY
HIV cannot be spread through hugging; HIV is spread through blood and semen, for example, but you cannot become infected through ordinary contact — hugging, kissing, dancing or shaking hands — with someone who has HIV or AIDS. HIV can't be transmitted through the air, water or insect bites.

MYTH
I can get HIV from mosquitoes.

REALITY
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), mosquitoes do not inject blood when they bite. As a result, mosquitoes do not transmit the virus.

MYTH
If I stay healthy, I can't get HIV.

REALITY
It doesn't matter if you're the healthiest person on Earth, HIV is a virus that attaches itself to your cells and prevents them from doing their job for the immune system, making you open to infections, disease and other viruses.

MORE ONLINE
MORE TRUTHS AND MYTHS
ONLINE AT VOXATL.COM

SOURCES:

AIDS CLINIC AT MOREHOUSE COLLEGE; GREATER THAN AIDS; LAMAR YARBOROUGH AT HYPE TO EMPOWER; MAYO CLINIC; LOREEN KRUG AT AID ATLANTA.

Graphic above by Jason Crichton, VOX Investigates

CLICK HERE:

Did you know HIV is a big problem among teens in Atlanta, and that Atlanta has the fifth-highest rate among metro areas of new cases, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nationally, the CDC says in 2013, nearly 10,000 youth were diagnosed with HIV, and more than half of those infected don't know they're infected. Health experts believe misconceptions about HIV contribute to such statistics. For VOX Investigates, Miranda Mullins and Jason Crichton report on the myths surrounding HIV among teenagers in Atlanta. Listen to their full report then test your knowledge at VOXATL.COM.



Are You Protected Against HIV?

Take this quiz to find out how well educated you are about HIV! Knowledge is the first step to truly be protected. Source: <http://www.hivlawandpolicy.org/states/georgia>

TEST YOUR HIV AND AIDS KNOWLEDGE ON OUR PLAYBUZZ QUIZ: <http://bit.ly/hivquiz>

COMMON TERMINOLOGY
Helpful terms to understand HIV and AIDS

AIDS

Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome is a condition that results in serious damage to the immune system. It is caused by the HIV infection.

Antibody

An antibody is a protein produced by the body's immune system when it detects harmful antigens. Your body makes a protein to try to fight off something harmful.

Antigen

An antigen is a foreign substance that triggers a reaction from the immune system.

Antiviral

Treatment (medicine) used to prevent the growth or replication of viruses.

Antiretroviral therapy (ART)

Treatment against retroviruses, like HIV; drugs that keep HIV from progressing.

HIV

Human immunodeficiency virus weakens the immune system over time and can cause acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

Immunodeficiency

The body's inability to protect or defend itself against infections and disease.

Pathogen

Pathogens are disease-causing microorganisms, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and worms. They make you sick.

PEP

Post-exposure prophylaxis is anti-HIV medication taken as soon as possible (but within three days) after possible exposure to HIV to try to reduce the chance of becoming infected. The word "prophylaxis" means the prevention or control of the spread of an infection or disease.

PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis is a medicine people who are at high risk for HIV infection can take every day to prevent HIV infection.

Stigma

Disgrace connected to a particular situation or circumstance. Stigma can result

in prejudice and discrimination aimed toward people with HIV or AIDS.

T CELL

Also called CD4 cell, these cells trigger the body's immune system to fight off infection. HIV attacks these cells.

Sources and more information:

1. AIDS Education Month: aidseducationmonth.org/
2. AIDSinfo: aidsinfo.nih.gov
3. Healthline: healthline.com
4. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: hiv.va.gov

— Compiled by Nahila Louis-Charles, VOX Investigates

HIV RISING IN ATLANTA

Thousands of 13- to 24-year-olds don't know they're infected

By Jason Crichton and
Miranda Mullins
VOX Investigates

March 28, 2010, was LaMar Yarborough's 18th birthday, and he was laying in the intensive care unit at Grady Memorial Hospital, where he learned he was HIV-positive and later found out he developed AIDS. "They told me I was diagnosed with AIDS with only five T cells. I didn't know what this is," recalled Yarborough, now 23. "I was so sick they thought I was going to die."

Even though he heard about AIDS in movies, his sex education at home and in school was limited. "In my family, we were pretty open with sex and things of that nature...but it [was] more so done in a heterosexual way," he explained, noting that he grew up in a religious household.

Yarborough said at the time he was sleeping with both men and women and thought: "If I'm not going to get a girl pregnant, why use a condom?"

Had Yarborough known earlier about his HIV diagnosis, there is a chance it would not have progressed to AIDS.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "an estimated 9,961 youth (ages 13 to 24) were diagnosed with HIV infection in the United States in 2013." That's 21 percent of all people who were diagnosed.

Health experts point to poor sex education as one major factor for the large number of HIV diagnoses among youth.

"I think the reason I didn't have a big breakdown [when I was diagnosed] is because I didn't know what the virus was," Yarborough admitted.

You've got to know what HIV is
"One of the things the epidemic is showing is how badly we need to increase and improve our education," said Craig Washington, prevention programs manager with AID Atlanta, a nonprofit that provides prevention, testing and treatment. "We need realistic sex education that deals with the realities about young people having sex and being in relationships, and also being able to have intimacy and a solid connection with each other. This is a natural human way of being."

Washington said he believes sex education should start as early as middle school.

Loreen Krug also works at AID Atlanta as the group's information services program manager. She said she has had a 13-year-old reach out to her, concerned about becoming infected with HIV because he was sexually active.

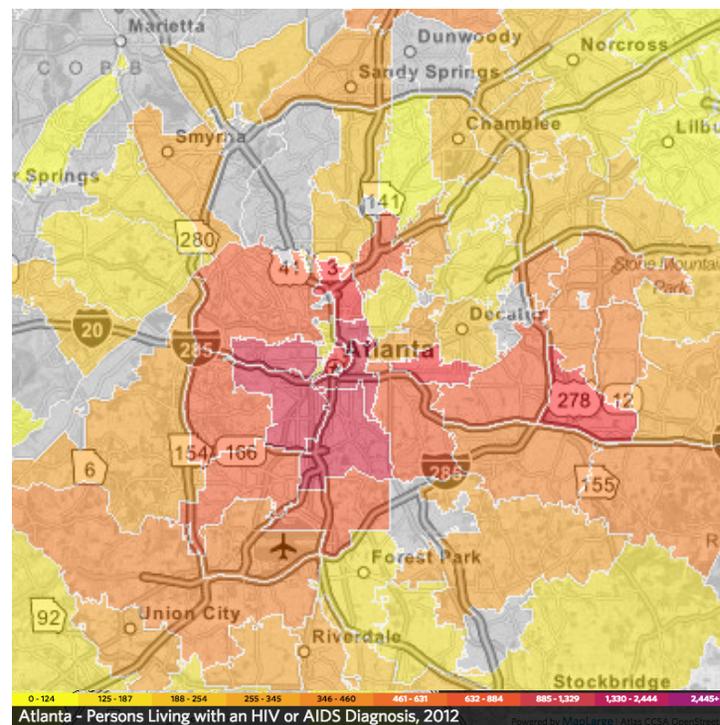
"Teenagers do this; that's normal," Krug said. "We need to make certain the first education is at home. Moms and dads should not be afraid to talk to their children about sex. ... We can all get [HIV] just in the blink of an eye."

Some school districts, like Fulton County Schools, emphasize an abstinence-only education. (See related story page 10.)

Quadir Thomas, who was at the AIDS Walk in Atlanta this fall, lost his aunt to AIDS when he was a young boy.

"When she passed away, it was quick," he said. "I always wondered, 'Why did it have to happen to my aunt?'"

Thomas said there needs to be more of a focus on abstinence education in schools, but he also said it is up to parents to educate their kids about sex. He started talking to his 19-year-old son about it when his son was in



AIDSVU.ORG
AIDSVU.org provides a comprehensive search tool for users to filter HIV and AIDS rates by state, city, county, race, age range, sex and other social determinants of health like poverty and household income. The maps above (Atlanta) and at right (major U.S. cities) show the prevalence rates among 13- to 24-year-olds. Use the key above to see the differences. (Example: In 2012, Union City saw between 255-345 people living with HIV or AIDS per 100,000 residents.)

elementary school.

"If you're going to engage in that activity, I can't tie a ball and chain around his ankle, but I try to give him the best knowledge to make the best decisions," Thomas stated.

Accessing health care

Proper education is one way of cutting down on the stigma and rates HIV infections. Health experts say having access to health coverage is another. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, Medicaid is the largest

source of insurance coverage for people with HIV in the U.S. But many states in the South, including Georgia, did not expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, the federal health care law signed by President Obama in 2010.

Nic Carlisle, the executive director of the Southern AIDS Coalition, told Georgia Public Broadcasting that people in these states who do not have access to Medicaid coverage may not develop a doctor-patient relationship to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS.

LaMar Yarborough has relied on the Ryan White CARE Act for access to his care. Five years after his diagnosis, Yarborough is working to make sure teens in Atlanta never

among youth.

“Younger people are becoming less bigoted. I think there’s less homophobia,” Washington said. “Younger generations are a reflection of that. At the same time, the stigma is still there, but I think you have a greater possibility of reaching folks as conversations about race, sexual orientation and gender identity become more normal and can free up some attitudes about HIV.”

While treatment and prevention are better than they once were, the virus is still a real problem, especially in Georgia, which leads most states when it comes to cases of new HIV diagnosis, according to Douglas Brooks, the director of the Office of National AIDS Policy at the White House.



SCREENSHOTS FROM AIDSVU.ORG

have to go through what he has experienced. This past summer, he started an organization called H.Y.P.E. To Empower, aimed at raising awareness about HIV and AIDS among youth. His group is focused on areas of Atlanta with the highest concentration of infection rates.

“HIV was the best thing that happened to me,” he said. “I know that sounds crazy, but I think to a certain extent it empowered me to empower others and empowered me to love myself more.”

Craig Washington of AID Atlanta said attitudes about HIV and AIDS are shifting

to change the face of HIV/AIDS in America.”

Hear from Brooks and several Atlanta-area teens in our audio story at voxatl.com/category/vox-investigates/.

Miranda and Jason recorded most of their interviews at the 25th Annual AIDS Walk.

HIV + AIDS + ATL
BY THE NUMBERS

5 Atlanta is the **fifth-highest U.S. city** for the rate of new HIV diagnoses

one in 4 of new infections are among 13- to 24-year-olds. **Half** don't know they're infected.

26,743 **68%** Number of people living with an HIV or AIDS diagnosis in 2012 in Atlanta of people living with HIV diagnosis in Atlanta in 2012 were black, **19%** were white and **6%** were Latino

BOYS + GIRLS + HIV

80% of people living with an HIV diagnosis in 2012 in Atlanta were men

62% of HIV cases in men were from male-to-male sexual contact

54% of HIV cases in 2012 in ATL women were from heterosexual contact

9% of ATL women contracted HIV through injection drug use in 2012

SOURCE: CDC, AIDSVU.ORG

HIV IN ATL

CARLA



“I have a cousin who is HIV-positive. He contracted HIV when I was a kid, but there was such a stigma around HIV and AIDS that he wasn’t comfortable telling our family that he was HIV-positive, or even that he was gay.

I was in my 20s when I found out, and I was shocked. I used to think you could catch HIV just by touching someone who was HIV-positive. Once, right after I found out about his status, I had to ride in his car, but I didn’t want to touch anything because I thought I would contract it. It wasn’t until I learned more about HIV/AIDS that I realized how you actually contract it, and I realized how amazing it was that he had been living with HIV for so long. I felt sorry that he couldn’t share with us that he had been living with this virus for over 20 years. I was sad that he felt he had to keep it a secret.”

PHOTO AND STORY BY LIZZIE LIKNESS | VOX INVESTIGATES



GO!

Step 1: Jaleelah decided to see how HIV testing works. AID Atlanta is one of many sites where teens can get tested for free.



Step 2: Testing can feel intimidating. A front desk attendant will hand you a screening tool and have you go to a waiting area.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO: TESTING FOR HIV AND AIDS

By Nahia Louis-Charles
VOX Investigates

No one is responsible for your HIV status but you. You're responsible for knowing it, taking care of it and staying HIV-healthy — and that comes first and foremost from knowing your status," says Kendall Boone, a Greater than AIDS national ambassador who works with Emory University's clinical trials where medications get tested for treating HIV and AIDS.

Testing for HIV status may seem scary or even unnecessary, but it is vital in stopping the growing HIV epidemic among teens in Atlanta. It's important to know your status.

Boone says, "People have HIV — or they live in silence with it — because they don't talk about it. So I would really encourage teens in Atlanta in becoming advocates ... become involved in conversations around HIV. Join conversations about it ... (and) know your status and take responsibility for yourself."

To get tested, here's what you need to know.

You don't need a parent.

It is not required for teens 13 and older to get parental consent for HIV and AIDS testing (and other sexually transmitted diseases), according to AID Atlanta. However, each testing facility has its own rules regarding age requirements and parent consent for treatment in case teens test HIV-positive.

According to the Center for HIV Law and Policy, doctors can, but are not required to, notify a teen's parents of the HIV test result. "Although roughly a third of the states permit healthcare providers to inform a minor's parents that their child is seeking STI-related services, none require it."

You have privacy.

The Privacy Rule under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) basically states that no one can use your health information or tell someone else about your status without your permission.

It's important to understand, though, that whenever someone is infected with a sexually transmitted infection or disease, that information may be reported to the local or state health department, says Raymond Duke, who is responsible for prevention education, health and safety and training at STAND, a nonprofit serving teens and adults. When

someone gets tested, a form that includes demographic information — but not names — goes to Georgia's Department of Public Health to report on birthdate, race, gender, zip code and HIV status. That's how the numbers get compiled.

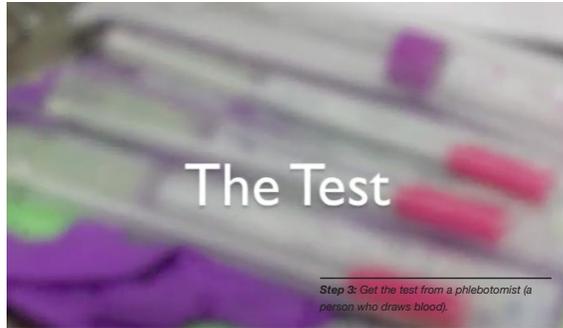
You're not alone.

It's never just an HIV test. Someone will help you and counsel you before and/or after testing, according to hivdent.org. The State of Georgia requires counseling for everyone. Pre-test counseling and post-test counseling with a confirmed HIV-positive test result are required.

It's a crime to knowingly spread HIV.

In 39 states, Georgia included, it is a crime to have sex if you are HIV-positive or have AIDS without letting your partner know. It's also a crime if that person donates fluid, organs or human tissue. The person could be imprisoned up to 10 years, according to the American Civil Liberties Union's State Criminal Statutes on HIV Transmission.

Travel with teen Jaleelah to AID Atlanta for an HIV test in a video report on VOXATL.COM. All photos on this page by Lizzie Likness, VOX Investigates.



Step 3: Get the test from a phlebotomist (a person who draws blood).

TESTING SITES: ATL

These nonprofit locations are MARTA-accessible and receptive to teens.

3. Mister Center

WHO: Teens 16 years and older can receive a free HIV Test. Support groups are available and linkage to medical care, offered through Positive Impact Health Centers.

WHERE: 1117 West Peachtree Street, Atlanta, Georgia, 30309

WHEN: Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

CONTACT: (678) 365-4300. Walk-ins welcome; mistercenter.org; positiveimpacthealthcenters.org

4. STAND

WHO: Teens age 16 and older can receive a free oral swab HIV test (20-minutes test). No ID or other documents are required.

WHAT: Teens who test positive receive post-test counseling to get links to care and other supports.

WHERE: 4319 Covington Hwy., #117, Decatur, Georgia, 30035

WHEN: Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

CONTACT: (404) 288-4668, ask for testing. Walk-ins welcome; standinc.com

Text your ZIP code to KNOWIT (566948), and you will receive a text back with a testing site near you.

Step 4: Just a little fingerstick and 60 seconds to wait for the results if you have an instant test.



Step 5: Counseling awaits and is required for anyone who tests HIV-positive.



DONE!

TESTING SITES: ATL

These nonprofit locations are MARTA-accessible and receptive to teens.

1. AID Atlanta

WHO: Anyone 13 and up can get a free HIV test independently. Teens who test positive are referred to Grady Infectious Diseases Program.

WHERE: 1605 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30309

WHEN: testing center is open Monday-Thursday 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. and Fridays 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Try to arrive 30 minutes prior to closing.

CONTACT: (404) 870-7722, aidatlanta.org
AID Atlanta also offers HIV testing through community outreach events. Contact communitytesting@aidatlanta.org to bring testing to a school, organization or event.

2. ANIZ, Inc.

WHO: Teen females, ages 13 to 18, can get free HIV tests. Parental consent is needed to treat minors.

WHERE: 233 Mitchell Street, Suite 200, Atlanta, Georgia, 30303

WHEN: Monday-Thursday, 10 a.m. - 6p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

CONTACT: (404) 521-2410 for an appointment, aniz.org

MORE TESTING SITES ON PAGE 7

HOW IS HEALTH BEING TAUGHT IN METRO ATLANTA?

Atlanta has many school systems but few options for comprehensive health education

By Kayla Smith
VOX Investigates

Since sixth grade, my mother made it her mission to keep me informed about everything concerning me at the time. That included having The Talk every morning on the way to school, which was 15 minutes every day. Though I was miserable enduring her conversations about the human anatomy and body functions, she was more informative than my ninth grade health class. All I remember is failing my CPR test, people shouting “penis!” randomly, and Coach Carr’s words from “Mean Girls:” “Don’t have sex because you will get pregnant and die ... just don’t do it, okay, promise?”

Seeing that I didn’t have a high-impact or informative health class, I wanted to investigate and see if times were changing and students were getting the information related to sex education and disease prevention they need.

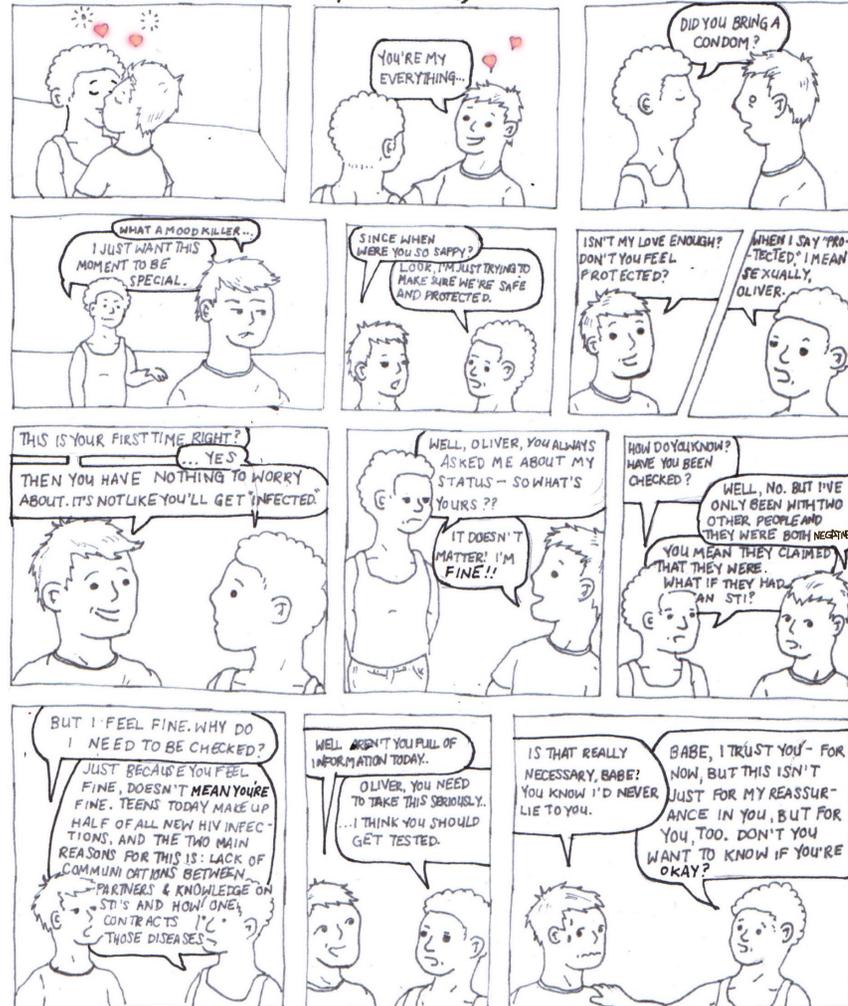
In Georgia, the local board of education has the most power over what goes in a school sex education curriculum, according to Lauren Barineau, training and technical assistance coordinator for the nonprofit Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential (GCAPP). She designs and delivers

skills-based trainings for professionals related to reproductive health, effective sexual health education curricula, and other topics that enhance adolescent health. “The state law says that the course can include topics such as: human biology, conception, pregnancy, birth, STDs/AIDS ... but [the state board of education] doesn’t say very much on things that shouldn’t be included.” So, what do metro Atlanta’s counties and city schools teach?

FLASH in DeKalb

Last summer, DeKalb County adopted the FLASH curriculum for their K-12 health courses for this school year. FLASH is an “interactive and comprehensive science-based sexual

IS LOVE JUST ENOUGH? by Lucas Berger



More HEALTH on page 11

health education curriculum designed to prevent teen pregnancy, STDs, and sexual violence." Schools can use the curriculum or its activities to shape the learning in the classroom, but they'll still be following their state or county standards. This curriculum can be applied to state and national standards and can serve as guide to tackling specific topics that arise throughout the course — meaning: Schools use the curriculum's activities to shape classroom learning, while following their state or county standards.

According to the curriculum publisher's website, "FLASH lessons prepare students to:

- Abstain from sex
- Use condoms and birth control when they do have sex
- Confirm consent before engaging in sexual activity
- Communicate with their family about sexual health
- Make decisions that minimize risk to their sexual health
- Seek medical care in order to take care of their reproductive health."

According to FLASH, their program is based off the "Theory of Planned Behavior."

The theory targets teens to create beliefs and health habits that reduce sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancies and abusive relationships. DeKalb requires K-12 students to have a parent sign a waiver of consent, which acknowledges the course and the parent's choice to opt their child out of it.

Not all of the local school systems are using this widely known curriculum. In the past, Cobb, Fulton and Gwinnett counties only had overviews of health that focused on meeting the Georgia performance standards through equipping students with the skills to make lifelong healthy choices from textbook publishers like Harcourt and Glencoe. Here are the counties' general policies:

COBB: According to the county's website, their motto is, "A student's health directly influences his or her success in school and beyond." The curriculum focus allows students to "...make decisions, become health advocates of healthy living, and choose healthy behaviors for life."

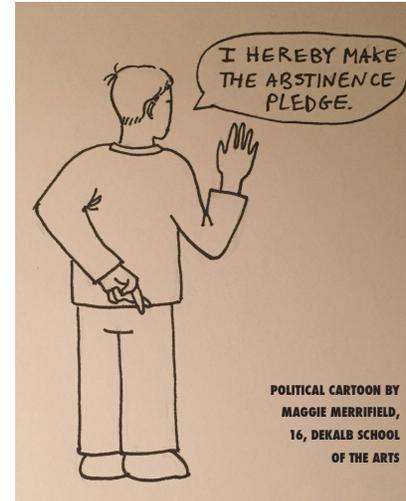
FULTON: Although it is one of the counties with the highest new HIV infection rates among youth, Fulton County promotes physical education more than comprehensive health for its high school students.

Abstinence-based programs are rooted in the notion that teens will keep their pledge to remain abstinent, but young adults ages 16 and 24 make up about 50 percent of all the new HIV infections. The county has been in the local news this fall for considering updates to its health curriculum.

GWINNETT: Here, parents are the main health educator and can opt their student out of sex education.

Choosing the Best

According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, "Choosing the Best" (based in Atlanta) is one of the more widely used abstinence-centered sex ed curricula in the U.S. — used in 47 states. Materials for "Choosing the Best" have been revised several times in recent years in response to input and criticism. Unlike the FLASH curriculum used in DeKalb County, this curriculum "does not provide information about how to use contraceptives," Tasha Guadalupe, health and physical education coordinator for Fulton Schools, told the AJC in September. Even with the changes to the curriculum, such as new statistics and visual aides, the main objective is to advocate that students should wait until they are married to have sex.



philosophy of health education is "...to support students' development of skills and habits that contribute to overall health and well-being. Emphasis is placed on safety, nutrition, mental health, substance abuse prevention, disease prevention, healthy decision-making and relationships." City of Decatur Schools emphasize a student's healthy habits and how

they will affect them in the long run. Nutrition values, the importance of exercise and CPR are a few examples of the healthy habits they want students to know. Each county or city school system is left to make its own decision, and some seem to lack areas of health education that others provide.

The more limited programs seem to be based on the assumption that parents will be the ones who will educate their children about sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases — including HIV and AIDS. Comprehensive programs seem to tackle those specific subjects from a science-based perspective.

However, even comprehensive programs allow parents to acknowledge the content being taught and decide whether they want to opt their child out of the particular unit due to personal reasons. Both types of programs come with their flaws, but in today's society, should we let the statistics or one's morals guide the classroom?

Kayla, 16, is a junior at DeKalb School of the Arts.



COMIC BY LUCAS BERGER | VOX CONTRIBUTOR

Each system to its own

In Atlanta Public Schools, the



GETTING TO ZERO

Teens dance to inform, inspire no new HIV infections

By Nea-Sa'Mon Wray
VOX Investigates Contributor

The "Getting to Zero" performance by Moving in the Spirit's teen dancers relays a series of short stories revealing the hard-hitting reality of the presence of HIV and AIDS among young people in Atlanta.

The seven teens who performed in the group's October 24 opening performance utilized bodily strength and passionate feelings to convey both the physical and emotional pressure that comes with the responsibility of getting tested for HIV, being

yourself and others.

My favorite part of this 20-minute performance was when three of the teens stood before the audience and as different characters began shouting in discord about their experiences with learning that they were HIV-positive. One teen was passively trying to explain her confusion, laughing it off as she went along. Another was truthfully perplexed and wondered how something like this could have happened, constantly reminding himself that it wasn't his fault. The third teen was in utter disgust, furious that

truthful to your partner about your status and ultimately making the best decision to protect

the person that she trusted lied to her about their status.

Occurring simultaneously, you can hardly make out what each teen is saying, which only synchronizes the feelings of chaos and frustration that these teenage characters are facing — and this is how teens in Atlanta who have been diagnosed may be feeling right now.

The performance emphasized abstinence, most notably during the first scene, when a sergeant-like persona demanded his cadets train hard to "lock up" their sexual feelings; some cadets weren't so successful, thus making the audience aware of those who are interested in having sex and providing information as to how to remain safe (wearing condoms and getting tested regularly) in a humorous way.

HIV + TIME
A BRIEF HISTORY

- 1981** First case of AIDS is reported.
- 1984** Doctors at the National Cancer Institute discover what causes AIDS: the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
- 1990** Ryan White, a teenage boy diagnosed with AIDS, dies at age 18. Congress passes Ryan White CARE Act.
- 1991** Earvin "Magic" Johnson announces he is HIV-positive.
- 1994** AIDS is the leading cause of death among Americans ages 25-44.
- 2006** The CDC recommends regular HIV screening in U.S. healthcare settings.
- 2013** The CDC says a daily medication (PrEP) may keep HIV from spreading from a positive person to a negative person.
- 2015** Medicare expands coverage of annual HIV screening for people ages 15-65.

SOURCES: HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION, CDC

GETTING TO ZERO, continued

This is why creating HIV and AIDS awareness is so pivotal to our community: to shake the confusion, to shake the fear, to shake the stigma and get that 70 percent spike in HIV diagnosis to zero.

For a look at Moving in the Spirit's powerful moves and to hear from some of the dancers, see the video online at voxtat.com/category/vox-investigates/. Photos on page 12 are from their performance on October 24, 2015 at The Beam.

Nea-Sa'Mon is a 19-lightyear-old extraterrestrial from Venus studying art at Georgia State University, who enjoys a cup of hot tea and marathons of "The X Files."

HOLLYWOOD MAGIC

Celebs can help spread the message to get tested

By Jada Jackson
VOX Investigates

More than 1.1 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV. About 30 million people have died from HIV and AIDS-related causes since its discovery in 1981. Roughly 1.7 million died in 2011 alone. Of all the people who have HIV and AIDS, one case in particular seems to stick out.

Earvin "Magic" Johnson was diagnosed with HIV in 1991 when AIDS was known to kill people at a very young age. He has managed to be healthy during the past 20 years since the day he announced he had the disease.

Unlike Johnson, other celebrities have not been as open about their HIV or AIDS status. Other celebrities in Hollywood include deceased rapper and former member of N.W.A. Eric Wright, better known as "Eazy-E." For a long time, a lot of celebrities did not come out about their status, maybe because of what fans might think of them.

Also, a lot of the celebrities at that time who also had HIV or AIDS did not say so publicly until nearly on their deathbed, or it was not disclosed to the press until after they died. Rock Hudson, Liberace, Robert Reed of "The Brady Bunch," and Freddy Mercury of Queen all had HIV or AIDS, and no one knew until it was announced they were dying or had already died. This shows how the disease was viewed and how not sharing it was possibly for the celebrities' own good. If they came out sooner about their status, maybe it would have erased some of the stigma that exists with HIV.

So why is it that Magic Johnson is one of few HIV-positive celebrities who has spoken out about it? Would it help if more celebrities talked about the subject more?

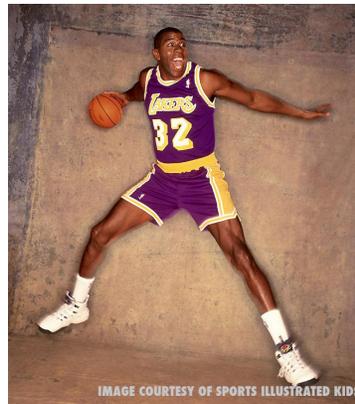


IMAGE COURTESY OF SPORTS ILLUSTRATED KIDS

Celebrities have focused on advertising to teens about staying drug free (mainly tobacco). They often come up with really eye-catching commercials or cartoons, in which celebrities create Vine and Instagram parodies of how smoking at a party usually goes and how we can prevent smoking as a whole.

Now that the tobacco usage has gone down among teens — one out of 10 teens don't smoke, according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "The Real Cost" campaign — the focus should shift to teens getting tested regularly for HIV. If teens watch their favorite celebrities talk about crucial issues, teens will follow. Also, when you see anti-tobacco commercials, you don't really see mainstream artists, but more

teen actors from Nickelodeon shows. These prevention commercials would be stronger if we had more famous celebrities like Beyoncé, Drake, Taylor Swift or Nick Jonas. All leaders follow by example and have some type of inspiration, so celebs, let's gear up and be the change we want to see.

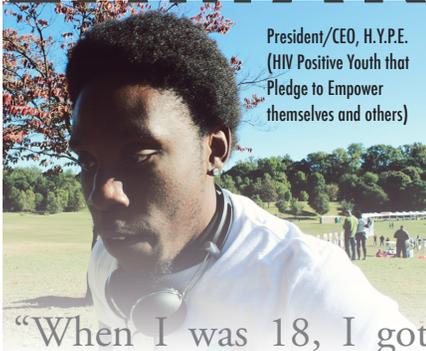
Another thing that seems to be a great way to spread the message about HIV is through our favorite shows and movies. A show I recently started to get more into because of the crazy suspense and the awesome features is "How to Get Away with Murder" (ABC). I typically stick to the main drama of the show, but in a few episodes there were scenes that talked about PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis, a medicine that some people who are at high risk of getting HIV can take to prevent infection) which was very informative while also entertaining. The main focus was not the character with HIV or his boyfriend, who was taking PrEP, but the episode did shine some light on the two.

This is not the only time I have seen characters with HIV or AIDS in television or movies. Tyler Perry also included the topic in one of his films, "For Colored Girls." One of the protagonists' husbands in the film is closeted and transmits HIV to his wife. HBO also released a movie in 2014 called "The Normal Heart," about HIV and AIDS in the 1980s, starring Mark Ruffalo and Julia Roberts. This is great because even celebrities who do not have the disease are still supportive of the people who do.

Using media as an outlet could be a big advantage in making more people aware of HIV and AIDS, and it can help teens who don't know what to do or where to get help. The message the media should convey is your HIV status should not make you feel ashamed.

Jada is a junior at North Atlanta High School.

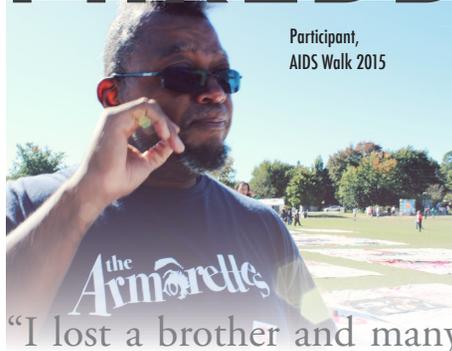
LAMAR PHREDD DALORA



President/CEO, H.Y.P.E. (HIV Positive Youth that Pledge to Empower themselves and others)

“When I was 18, I got super sick. I couldn’t even walk from my door to my mailbox without being out of breath.

A couple of days before my birthday, I fainted in the shower and went to the emergency room. I was diagnosed with AIDS. Growing up, I knew nothing about HIV or AIDS, so I didn’t understand how serious it was. When they told me I was dying, the only thing I could think about was the legacy I was leaving behind. As I got better, I realized I didn’t want anybody else to have to live with this disease.”



Participant, AIDS Walk 2015

“I lost a brother and many friends to AIDS. I’m not sure how to express what it’s like to lose someone you love to AIDS.

It sounds callous, but it did affect me differently when my brother passed away as opposed to when my friends passed. I grew up with my brother and I loved him, but he was always in and out of trouble, and I wasn’t as shocked when he died. It was different with my friends. Losing one friend in particular was very hard. When I met him, he was so vibrant and funny and full of life. He was the type of person you really looked forward to seeing. I watched him deteriorate; toward the end of his life, it was like he wasn’t even himself. He was a huge part of my life and I never got to tell him. You think that after years, the wounds would heal, but they never do, not completely. I don’t want other people to have to lose someone they love like that.”



Counselor, AID Atlanta

“As a counselor for people who are HIV-positive, I’ve had experience helping people from a lot of different backgrounds.

But I’ve realized that every person is affected by HIV. I’ve worked with a lot of people who feel like they have to keep this part of their lives secret. Some even refuse to take care of themselves and get treatment because they want to keep their diagnosis a secret. On the other hand, I’ve seen that good can come out of a positive HIV diagnosis. I’ve seen so many people turn their lives around after being diagnosed. A lot of people are able to find a sense of community and try to educate themselves

ALL PHOTOS AND PROFILES BY LIZZIE LIKNESS | VOX INVESTIGATES

JustUsATL Breaks Down Stigma for ATL Transgender Youth

By Sarah Hutson
VOX Investigates

Despite living in a more progressive time period, conversations tend to be burdened by a mandate of silence when it comes to talking about how HIV or AIDS impacts the transgender community.

“I think we avoid sex-talk because

we have some members within the trans community who are really sensitive to those things (HIV),” says Kayla Christ, 17, a trans girl who lives in Atlanta. “I have taken notice to when individuals are adjusted to being trans; they become more at ease with conversing on the topic of sexual intercourse.”

JustUsATL, a nonprofit in midtown Atlanta, is one of a few support groups that encourage trans teens with safe spaces and forums. These forums include dialogues on various

topics — including HIV, AIDS and more. “JustUsATL is a democratic social and activism group lead by queer youth, for queer youth,” said Zaiyah Phillips, the organization’s JusTeens and TransIt forum leader. “We are a strong community, and together we support each other, tackle important topics, and have fun.”

Read more about HIV and trans teens and other groups that are not often heard from at voxatl.com/category/vox-investigates/.

#1 AID Atlanta



Services: AIDS-awareness presentations for metro-Atlanta middle and high schools; HIV community testing available for youth service organizations; and HIV and STI testing.

Age of teens served: 13 and up

Fees: No fees for HIV or STI/STD screenings or STI/STD treatment (appointment must be made for STI/STD treatment).

Contact: 1605 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30309, cicely.richard@aidatlanta.org; Cicely Richard, MSW, Youth Outreach Program Coordinator, 404-870-7700, aidatlanta.org

Georgia AIDS and STD Information Line: 800-551-2728

#4 Center for Pan Asian Community Services



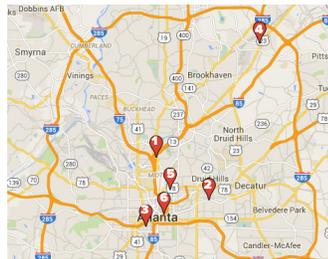
Services: Linkage to HIV testing and counseling, as well as confirmatory HIV testing at CPACS' health center. Also, safer sex workshops for youth, available by request.

Age of teens served: 13 to 19

Fees: Free rapid HIV testing and counseling, reduced rate for confirmatory testing at our Federally Qualified Health Center.

Contact: Alnory Gutlay, programs manager, Alnory.regondola@cpacs.org; Eddie Vo, program coordinator, Eddie.vo@cpacs.org; Web: icpacs.org/; health center website: cpacscosmo.org/; Phone: 770-446-0926

FIND RESOURCES #2 Atlanta



Coalition for LGBTQ Youth (ACFLY)



Services: ACFLY is a coalition and program of Georgia Equality (georgiaequality.org), open to youth-serving providers in Atlanta who want to improve their ability to serve LGBTQ youth.

Contact: Emily Halden Brown, Phillip Rush Center, 1530 DeKalb Avenue, Suite A, Atlanta, GA 30307; emily@GeorgiaEquality.org; 404-523-3070; Facebook and Twitter @TheQ_ATL

#3 Center for Black Women's Wellness Adolescent Health & Youth Development Program



Services offered to TEENS & HIV: Health education: life skills, leadership development, sexuality education. Rapid HIV testing.

Ages: 12-17

Contact: Keri M. Pridgeon; 477 Windsor Street SW, Suite 309, Atlanta, GA 30312; Phone: 404-688-9202 ext.124, keri@cbww.org; cbww.org

#5 Grady Infectious Disease Program



Services: Grady's Pediatric Clinic within the Ponce de Leon Center serves all HIV-positive youth under the age of 25 with comprehensive HIV care as well as STD testing and primary care services.

Fees: This is a Ryan White clinic, so you do not need insurance (although you can still come if you have it). Most patients have medical visits and medicines almost completely covered by Ryan White funds, with only a couple dollar copay out of pocket.

Hours: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Contact: Address is 341 Ponce De Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30307. Arrive to the Education Department on the P level of the building with proof of HIV+ status, a photo ID, proof of address and proof income. Contact Larisa Niles-Carnes with any questions: lnilesarnes@GMH.EDU or 404-616-2202.

#6 Teen Services Clinic



Services: Provides HIV testing and referral, STD screening and treatment, full range of contraceptives — including IUDs and implants, exams, reproductive and sexual health education and care.

Ages: Teens through age 19

Hours: Clinic is Monday and Wednesday afternoon (12:30 - 4:30 p.m.) and Saturday morning (8 a.m. - 12 p.m.). Flexible scheduling offered.

Fees: Insurance is accepted, and for those who do not have insurance, costs are based on a sliding scale. You will never be turned away if you can't pay.

Contact: Grady Hospital, second floor; 404-616-3513; gradyhealth.org/facility/teen-center

ABOUT VOX

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VOXATL

Where teens speak and Atlanta listens



VOX is Atlanta's home for uncensored teen publishing and self-expression.

- VOX creates a **level playing field** where teens collaborate directly with adults as peers.
- VOX partners with media professionals so teens learn **critical thinking, writing and publishing skills** to help hone their voice.
- VOX connects a **widely diverse group of teens** from all across metro Atlanta to one neutral space to share and develop their voices together.
- VOX believes that the **voice of young people is powerful and valuable** and should be more present in metro Atlanta.



More programs and possibilities for teens in metro Atlanta are available! Visit VOXATL.org for more information about how adults can help **prepare, connect and value** teens.

VOXATL.ORG

VOX INVESTIGATES



This publication was created by **VOX Investigates**, where teens spend a semester working together to take a deep-dive look at issues of critical importance to the Atlanta community. Each semester's team **investigates and shares teens' voices** about one topic.

This spring, **VOX Investigates** will cover **dating and relationship violence**, its impact on teens as well as examining aspects of healthy relationships.

Any teen (13-19) living in the five-county metro Atlanta area can apply online to be part of the team:
VOXATL.com/join-the-fun/

Questions?
Phone: 404-614-0040
Email: info@voxatl.org

VOXATL

Where teens speak and Atlanta listens



Teens First.

Teens, ages 13-19 and living in Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton and Gwinnett counties can engage with VOX on four levels.

TEEN STAFF

Up to 50 teens in metro ATL who commit to consistent publishing for VOXATL.com and semester-long content for VOX Investigates, as well as in-person leadership development at VOX's downtown newsroom.

TEEN CONTRIBUTORS

Up to 100 teens in metro Atlanta who publish consistent content for VOXATL.com and semester-long content for VOX Investigates. Invites to teen events at VOX.

ATLANTA TEEN VOICES

Opportunities for metro Atlanta teens to publish and project their voices on VOXATL.com through content created with community partners and at events.

TEEN AUDIENCE

Uncensored content by teens, for teens. Annual teen health survey of teen attitudes and behaviors to inform content and outreach for higher impact.

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- voxatl.tumblr.com

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