



Safer Sex Week 2025 Report



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Background

Safer Sex Week has been observed in Jamaica since 1994, strategically aligned with Valentine’s Day to promote safer sexual practices during a time associated with increased intimacy and romantic engagement. The celebrations are spearheaded annually by the HIV/STI/TB Unit (HSTU) of the Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOHW) and aims to promote healthy sexual behaviors, reduce stigma, and empower individuals with accurate information.

In 2025, the celebratory activities were held under the theme “Safe Sex is a Better Flex!” This messaging framed safe sex not only as a preventative measure but also as a confident, empowering lifestyle choice that supports better relationships, personal well-being, and community health.

Key objectives included:

- Increasing awareness of safe sex practices and their benefits.
- Encouraging dialogue on sexual health across various demographic groups.
- Utilizing media and digital platforms to extend campaign visibility.
- Promoting available HIV/STI prevention resources and services.
- Strengthening collaboration with community-based organizations and stakeholders.

Summary of National Activities

Tertiary Debate Competition

Date: Monday, February 10, 2025

Venue: University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona – Chancellor Hall

Target Audience: Youth aged 17–25, particularly Sexually Active Males (SAM) and Sexually Active Females (SAF)

The Tertiary Debate Competition was the first national event held, engaging 129 students and faculty in a lively British Parliamentary-style debate on the motion: *“This House Believes That safe sex advocacy campaigns should focus on empowerment rather than fear tactics.”*

Participants represented five institutions: UWI, University of Technology (UTech) Jamaica, University of the Commonwealth Caribbean (UCC), Excelsior Community College, and the Vocational Training Development Institute (VTDI). The space provided an interactive platform for discussing the effectiveness of health messaging strategies and encouraged critical thinking around stigma, misinformation, and advocacy.

Educational presentations on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by MOHW staff complemented the debate, reinforcing factual knowledge. Highlights of the event were

broadcast live via radio through interviews and supported by social media coverage across HSTU platforms to maximize outreach.

Challenges Identified:

While content delivery and debate quality were strong, several logistical issues were noted:

- Poor lighting and initial lack of electricity at the venue.
- Limited accessibility and parking.
- Absence of key equipment (e.g., projector screen), which affected visual engagement.
- Initial low turnout attributed to insufficient promotion.
- The outside broadcast was overly loud and disrupted the indoor experience.
- Limited audience engagement by the event host.

Despite these challenges, catering services were excellent, and the involvement of JADE in planning contributed positively to the overall coordination.

Key Population Event: “Queer Health Lyme”

Date: Wednesday, February 12, 2025

Venue: Equality for All Foundation

Target Audience: Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), Transgender Women (TGW)

The “Queer Health Lyme” was a private, targeted intervention held in collaboration with the Equality for All Foundation. The event provided a safe, affirming space for MSM and TGW to receive sexual health education, access services, and engage in open dialogue free from stigma.

Activities included condom demonstrations, myth-busting sessions, and ED-PrEP (2 attendees accessed the service), condom, and lubricant access stations. Music, refreshments, and giveaways created a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged participation. Real-time social media updates via the Colorfully Proud and HST Healthy Living platforms extended the event’s visibility online.

A total of 38 individuals attended, and a post-event evaluation conducted with 13 participants (aged 25 to 36+) showed overwhelmingly positive feedback. Participants described the educational content as valuable and expressed a strong desire for more events of this kind in safe, judgment-free environments.

Media Engagement

To support the week's outreach, messages from the Minister of Health & Wellness were published in the *Jamaica Gleaner*, *Sunday Observer*, and *The Weekend Star* on February 9 and 14. Additionally, a vox pop segment was produced to capture public opinions on safe sex, promoting broader community dialogue.

Social media was used effectively for real-time event updates, highlighting the Ministry's efforts to modernize health promotion and engage younger audiences digitally.

Strengths, Weaknesses & Limitations

Strengths

- **Youth Engagement:** The Tertiary Debate provided a relevant, thought-provoking platform for young people to engage with issues surrounding sexual health.
- **Targeted Outreach:** The Queer Health Lyme created a tailored, stigma-free environment for vulnerable populations to access critical information and services.
- **Partnerships:** Collaboration with JADE and the Equality for All Foundation improved event execution, outreach, and credibility.
- **Media Presence:** Ministerial messages and media placements ensured national visibility, while social media extended reach to younger and digital-first audiences.
- **Content Quality:** Educational materials and health presentations were well-received and informative.

Weaknesses

- **Turnout:** There was lower-than-expected turnout, particularly for the debate (at the start).
- **Venue Constraints:** Issues such as poor lighting, limited parking, lack of infrastructure, and missing equipment reduced the professional polish and accessibility of the debate event.
- **Programme Engagement:** The debate host lacked audience interaction skills, and structured audience activities were absent during key intervals (e.g., judging breaks). Also, the audience was not able to fully follow the debate format and therefore engagement was further lacking.
- **Technical Execution:** The radio broadcast was disruptive due to noise levels inside the venue, and visual aids were unavailable due to missing AV support.
- **Team Support:** There was low team member support and therefore key administrative activities were not executed (e.g. completion of evaluation forms).

Limitations

- **Evaluation Scope:** A comprehensive post-event evaluation with all participants was not conducted, limiting the ability to quantify learning outcomes or participant satisfaction.
- **Geographic Reach:** National activities were concentrated in Kingston, limiting access for stakeholders and populations in rural parishes.

Regional Activities supported by the National Prevention Team

Southern Regional Health Authority

During Safer Sex Week 2025, the Southern Regional Health Authority (SRHA)—through its health departments in Clarendon, Manchester, and St. Elizabeth—executed a series of public health interventions aligned with the national theme, “Safe Sex is a Better Flex.” Activities were designed to increase awareness, testing, and education around HIV, STIs, and sexual and reproductive health, with a strong focus on key and vulnerable populations, youth, and the general public.

Clarendon

The Clarendon Health Department, led by the Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Team in collaboration with Health Promotion and clinical staff, rolled out parish-wide interventions from February 10–15, 2025. Activities included community testing and educational sessions in Lionel Town, Chapelton, Spalding, Christiana (Workplace), Kellit's, and May Pen. The objectives were to:

- Provide HIV, Syphilis, and HIV self-testing (HIVST) services to at least 500 individuals.
- Promote consistent and correct condom use through the distribution of over 3,500 condoms and one-on-one risk reduction counselling.
- Increase knowledge of PrEP and make referrals for eligible individuals.

Manchester

The Manchester Health Department hosted a mix of clinical and community-based events across Mandeville, Top Sham, Newport, Christiana, and Kingsland from February 10–15, 2025. Key objectives included:

- Providing HIV and Syphilis testing for at least 200 individuals.
- Offering cardiovascular screenings (blood pressure and blood sugar) to 100 persons as part of integrated health services.
- Distributing over 5,000 condoms and 100 pieces of educational literature.
- Conducting workplace and school-based interventions targeting youth and adult populations, with a focus on sexual health education and PrEP sensitization.

Events took place at the Manchester Comprehensive Health Centre, South East College, and various call centres and workplace locations, with staff supported through provision of meals and supplies to facilitate outreach.

St. Elizabeth

The St. Elizabeth Health Department coordinated a series of community interventions from February 9–15, 2025, with a goal to:



- Distribute over 9,000 condoms.
- Provide HIV and Syphilis testing to a minimum of 390 individuals.
- Conduct PrEP sensitization and refer 100% of individuals who tested positive to appropriate care and treatment.
- Improve condom negotiation and use skills for at least 500 persons, including key population groups such as MSM, FSW, TG, and sexually active youth.

Key events included a launch church service, community testing in Santa Cruz and Black River, and forums at STETHS, BB Coke High School, and Bethlehem Moravian College. The department also held club visits and targeted outreach in remote communities. Events featured educational Q&A segments with incentive giveaways, performances, and collaboration with the ‘Know Your Numbers’ team, which provided general health screenings.

Western Regional Health Authority

In recognition of Safer Sex Week 2025, the Western Regional Health Authority (WRHA) implemented a regional campaign aimed at promoting sexual and reproductive health, increasing awareness, and expanding access to HIV and STI testing and prevention services. Activities were carried out across the four parishes—Westmoreland, Hanover, St. James, and Trelawny—from February 11–14, 2025, with each day dedicated to a major town square in a different parish.

Key Objectives and Activities

The WRHA’s coordinated approach, led by the Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and Know Your Numbers (KYN) teams, sought to:

- Provide HIV and Syphilis testing for at least 200 persons per parish.
- Conduct over 100 condom use demonstrations per parish.
- Distribute a minimum of 2,000 condoms along with educational materials on sexual health.
- Deliver integrated health services to both general and key populations, offering:
 - Blood pressure and blood sugar checks
 - Body Mass Index (BMI) and cholesterol screening
 - Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) screening for men
 - Health education sessions on condom negotiation, PrEP, STI awareness, and risk reduction.

These public-facing health fairs were designed to create accessible, stigma-free environments where individuals could learn about safer sex practices while accessing free testing and counselling services. Each venue also featured entertainment, giveaways, and health memorabilia to increase engagement and reach.

Schedule of Parish Activities



- February 11, 2025 – Westmoreland Town Centre
- February 12, 2025 – Clarks Town Square, Trelawny
- February 13, 2025 – Hopewell Square, Hanover
- February 14, 2025 – Sam Sharpe Square, St. James

The campaign was executed with support from local parish health teams, utilizing tents, branded materials, feather banners, and mobile outreach staff to enhance visibility and engagement. Daily refreshments were provided for outreach teams to ensure efficient and sustained delivery of services.

North East Regional Health Authority

During Safer Sex Week 2025, the North East Regional Health Authority (NERHA) implemented initiatives designed to promote sexual health, increase STI/HIV testing uptake, and educate the public—especially key and vulnerable populations—on prevention methods and overall wellness. The initiative was executed across St. Ann, St. Mary, and Portland between February 1–15, 2025, incorporating wellness fairs, educational competitions, school interventions, and healthcare worker involvement.

St. Ann

St. Ann launched and closed its Safer Sex Week activities with the “Let’s Talk About It – Safer Sex Better Flex” campaign, staged on:

- February 9 at New Windsor Pharmacy’s Lawn, St. Ann’s Bay; and
- February 15 at the Ocho Rios Town Centre.

These community wellness fairs targeted youth, men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender women (TGW), female sex workers (FSW), and the general public. Services and activities included:

- Free HIV and STI testing
- Condom demonstrations and contraceptive distribution
- Blood pressure and sugar screening
- Health education workshops on STI/NCD prevention, healthy relationships, and PrEP
- Interactive games, quizzes, raffles, and on-the-spot song competitions
- Community engagement via edutainment, giveaways, and wellness incentives

High School Interventions

From February 10–14, a high school outreach series was conducted under the theme of STI prevention and abstinence. Activities included:



- Drama presentations
- A QR code scavenger hunt

Student competitions (song, poetry, and drama) Winners were judged based on creativity, accuracy, and social media engagement, helping to amplify safe sex messages online. Participating schools included Aabuthnott Gallimore High, Brown's Town High, Ocho Rios High, and Marcus Garvey Technical High.

Healthcare Worker Engagement

Also hosted under the “No One Left Behind” banner, healthcare workers were engaged in STI awareness initiatives through internal competitions. Staff submitted:

Infographics on STI facts/statistics

1-minute educational videos on PrEP

Judging focused on creativity, clarity, and social media impact, with winning entries featured on the regional website and rewarded with wellness-themed incentives.

Portland

NERHA's Portland team implemented an STI Awareness Campaign titled “Safe Sex is Better Flex”, targeting adolescents, men, key populations, and the general public through the following events:

- February 10 – Female Sex Workers Workshop, Hope Bay Health Centre
- February 12 – Adolescent Workshop, Port Antonio Health Centre
- February 14 – Men's Empowerment Workshop, Manchioneal Health Centre
- February 14 – Community Road Tour, Port Antonio Town Square

Each session featured testing services, condom demonstrations, myth-busting discussions, games, quizzes, and live competitions, supported by mobile teams and health educators.

St. Mary

On February 1, St. Mary hosted a Safer Sex Week Pop-Up Event at Highgate Square. Key services included:

- Free HIV, STI, blood pressure, blood sugar, BMI, and cholesterol screening
- Condom demonstrations and negotiation training
- Gender-based violence (GBV) assessments
- PrEP sensitization and referrals
- Risk-reduction education through games, giveaways, and community dialogue
- The event targeted youth, MSM, TGW, FSWs, and sexually active males and females.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Safer Sex Week 2025 successfully furthered its core mission of promoting safer sexual practices through engaging, educational, and inclusive activities. The events—particularly the Tertiary Debate and Queer Health Lyme—demonstrated innovative approaches to community outreach and highlighted the benefits of strategic partnerships.

Moving forward, it is recommended that:

- Promotion be scaled up across traditional and digital platforms to improve attendance and visibility.
- Venues be selected based on accessibility, infrastructure, and technical readiness to avoid disruption and improve audience experience.
- A structured evaluation framework be implemented to measure knowledge transfer, satisfaction, and reach.
- Event programs include interactive elements for the audience and diversified content to maintain engagement.

By addressing these areas, future Safer Sex Week celebrations can further enhance their reach, effectiveness, and contribution to national sexual health goals.

Appendix



Figure 1: Instagram post to promote Safer Sex Week 2025

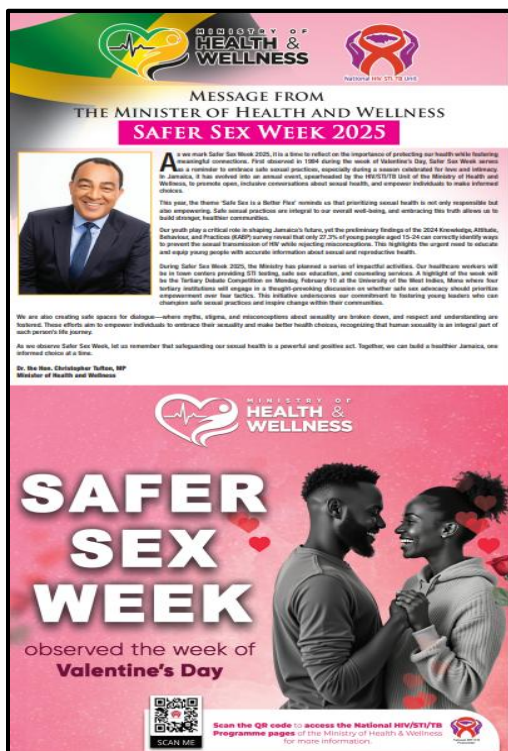


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