THE AIDS INSTITUTE RECOGNIZES HIV TESTING DAY

Treating and Eliminating HIV in the United States Starts with Testing

Washington, DC—In recognition of National HIV Testing Day on June 27th, The AIDS Institute encourages people to get tested for HIV to learn their status and make informed and empowered medical decisions. This year’s theme is Doing It My Way, reminding us there are more ways and more places than ever to get tested. People can get tested in a traditional healthcare setting such as a hospital, doctor’s office or health clinic and in non-clinical settings such as a mobile van, syringe service program, or in the privacy of their home. Testing is also easier and faster than ever before with results available from 60 seconds to thirty minutes.

To find the nearest HIV testing, treatment, or supportive service center go to: https://locator.hiv.gov/.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, for people who have private insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid in some states, HIV testing is one of the preventive services offered at no cost to the patient.

Getting tested and knowing your HIV status is crucial to receiving lifesaving care, treatment, and preventive services. Getting tested is not only integral to linking people to care but also in preventing additional HIV infections since HIV treatment is also HIV prevention. When a person is adherent to antiretroviral medication and reaches sustained viral suppression, they effectively cannot transmit the virus. Additionally, individuals who test negative can be linked to a medication regimen known as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), that can prevent the transmission of HIV.

The Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) set as one of his goals an end to HIV/AIDS in the foreseeable future. He can say this because we now have the tools to achieve it. However, the first step to ensuring everyone has access to care and treatment, and becomes virally suppressed, begins with testing.
Over 1.1 million people in the United States are currently living with HIV, and 1 in 7 of them do not know it. The CDC estimates that there are approximately 38,500 new HIV infections each year. Estimated annual HIV infections declined 8% between 2010 and 2015. This advance has been a direct result of effective prevention and treatment programs that include routine and cost-effective testing.

While we have made great progress in reducing the number of new HIV infections, this can be reversed if programs are not properly funded and by new threats, such as the opioid epidemic and increases in injection drug use. Affected communities and areas of the country, including those who are young and living in rural areas, are experiencing increases of HIV due to injection drug use. Many of these areas have insufficient prevention, intervention, and treatment resources.

To address these deficiencies, both the House and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee have approved the “Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Act of 2018,” which dedicates $40 million annually to help states and community-based organizations mobilize and coordinate resources, including HIV testing, to respond to the alarming spike in new cases of HIV and viral hepatitis associated with injection opioid use.

Sustained federal funding to CDC’s HIV Prevention programs, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, and the Secretary’s Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI) Program all play a role in supporting increased access to testing.

“Treating and eliminating HIV in the United States starts with testing. HIV Testing Day reminds all of us to take action and make sure HIV testing is a routine part of our medical care. It is also the time to remind our providers of the importance of following the routine testing guidelines. Everyone, no matter their perceived risk, should be tested at least once for HIV, and those who are at a higher risk should be tested frequently,” said Michael Ruppal, Executive Director of The AIDS Institute. “As we celebrate the progress made in HIV prevention, care, and treatment, we must not lose sight of how HIV testing is critical in the fight against this pandemic, achieving Zero new infections, and putting an end to HIV/AIDS.”

The AIDS Institute is a national non-partisan, nonprofit organization that promotes action for social change through public policy, research, advocacy and education.

For more information and to become involved, visit www.TheAIDSInstitute.org or write to us at Info@theaidsinstitute.org, and follow The AIDS Institute on Twitter @AIDSAdvocacy and Facebook at www.facebook.com/The-AIDS-Institute.