



STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

JANET OLSZEWSKI
DIRECTOR

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CONTACT: T.J. Bucholz
(517) 241-2112

Awards Given To Expand HIV Testing Opportunities For Racial And Ethnic Minorities

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) announced today that it has awarded \$1,039,923 to support expansion of HIV testing in health care settings to address racial/ethnic disparities in access to HIV testing, particularly in African American communities.

The goal of this funding, directed at communities hardest hit by the epidemic, is to increase the number of those getting tested and to successfully link those that test positive to medical care.

“Promoting HIV testing in high prevalence communities is vital in making individuals aware of their own status and in preventing the spread of HIV to others,” said Janet Olszewski, MDCH Director. “We estimate that only 39.5 percent of all Michigan adults aged 18-64 years have been tested for HIV, and we would like to see that number increase.”

Grants have been awarded to Advantage Health Centers of Detroit (\$259,100), Henry Ford Health Systems Emergency Department (\$255,823), Oakland County Health Division (\$240,000) and Wayne County Jail Health Services (\$285,000).

MDCH estimates that up to 17,000 Michigan residents are infected with HIV. Roughly one-quarter of these individuals do not know that they are HIV-infected. Each year, approximately 800 Michigan residents are diagnosed with HIV. The annual number of cases diagnosed has remained approximately level for the past five years. At the same time, the number of individuals living with HIV or AIDS in Michigan has been steadily increasing due to the availability of effective medical treatments for HIV disease.

Funding for these efforts was made available through a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Michigan was one of 23 states selected by CDC to receive funding to increase HIV testing among populations disproportionately affected by HIV, primarily African Americans. Nationwide, the CDC hopes that this funding will result in diagnosing nearly 20,000 individuals who are living with HIV, but do not yet know that they are infected. The main focus of funding is on making HIV testing a routine part of health care services provided in community health centers, hospital emergency departments, sexually transmitted disease clinics and correctional health facilities.

Experts in HIV/AIDS, STD and Health Disparities will be meeting at the Ann Arbor Marriott Ypsilanti, on **November 1-2, 2007** to discuss current trends on this and other related issues. For more information, please visit www.mihivnews.com/conference.htm or contact Debra Szwejd, Acting Division Director within the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Intervention Section of MDCH, at (517) 241-0854.

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