**Example Press Release 1: Increase in HIV Diagnoses among People Who Inject Drugs, Including a Group of Related Infections**

January 1, 2018

**State Health Department Examines Increase in HIV Diagnoses Among People Who Inject Drugs in Two Counties**

CITY, State — The State Department of Public Health is examining an increase in HIV infections among people who inject drugs in County A and County B in the western part of the state. HIV data reported to the State Department of Health show:

* The total number of HIV cases in the state has increased in recent years, with 12 reported diagnoses of HIV infection in 2017, compared to three in 2016 and two in 2015.
* Further analysis of data shows that the diagnoses of HIV infection are primarily among people who inject drugs and are concentrated in County A and County B.
* Reported risk factors for HIV infection in the affected areas have changed in recent years. In 2017, nine people reported injection drug use as risk factor. In 2016, just one person reported injection drug use as a risk factor.
* Lab data show that at least eight of the infections are related to each other. Although there may be other related infections that are not yet identified, these preliminary related infections suggest that HIV has been transmitted at a faster pace than would be expected for the affected areas.

Reported cases of acute hepatitis C infection have also increased in the state in recent years, which is often associated with increases in injection drug use. The increase in HIV diagnoses and group of related infections were discovered as part of the State Department of Public Health’s regular monitoring of HIV data and is a routine part of its work in public health.

Through interviews and other efforts, health officials hope to identify whether additional related infections exist, which will allow public health officials to better understand the factors that may be contributing to HIV transmission and attempt to determine whether others are at risk. Using this information, public health officials can work to identify whether people who are affected have access to HIV care, treatment and prevention services and can determine if additional response measures are needed.

Health officials have recommended the following actions be taken in County A and County B to diagnose additional infections and to reduce the risk of further transmission:

* Conducting targeted HIV testing among at-risk populations in County A and County B. Testing will also be done for other infections that are common in this at-risk population as well, including hepatitis C and sexually transmitted infections.
* Ensuring people with diagnosed HIV have access to appropriate care, both for HIV and for substance use disorder if needed.
* Encouraging other actions to reduce the risk of HIV infection, including the use of condoms and of clean needles, syringes, and injection equipment.
* Improving access to HIV preventative medications, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).

Community members can support the effort by being tested for HIV and by encouraging others to be tested. No-cost testing is available at County A Health Department and County B Health Department.

The State Department of Public Health encourages anyone in County A and County B who has ever injected drugs; exchanged sex for drugs or money; or has had sex with anyone who has engaged in these behaviors to get tested for HIV.

CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 be tested for HIV at least once. Women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant should be tested prior to giving birth, whether or not they have been tested previously. In addition, CDC recommends that people get tested for HIV at least once a year who:

* Are sexually active gay and bisexual men — with some sexually active gay and bisexual men potentially benefiting from more frequent testing (e.g., every 3 to 6 months).
* Have had sex with an HIV-positive partner.
* Have had more than one sexual partner since their last HIV test.
* Have shared syringes, needles, and/or equipment to inject drugs.
* Have exchanged sex for drugs, money, food, or housing.
* Have had another sexually transmitted disease, hepatitis infection, or tuberculosis.
* Have had sex with anyone who has done anything listed above.
* Have had sex with someone whose sexual history is not known.

For more information, please visit www.statehealthdepartment.gov.

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