September 30, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

This Friday, October 1, we are proud to recognize the tenth annual National Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) Recognition Day. As our nation continues to face historic challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain deeply indebted to the DIS working on the frontline of public health.

Battling burnout, an unprecedented caseload, and additional responsibility, DIS remain committed to fighting increases in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and tuberculosis, helping end the HIV epidemic, and supporting our national response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging health threats. On behalf of CDC, we are honored to acknowledge their tremendous contribution to the safety and health of the nation.

Local, state, and federal DIS perform one of the most essential actions of our nation’s defense against infectious diseases – boots-on-the-ground contact tracing. They have long provided this support to stop infectious disease outbreaks, particularly STDs. This year, recognizing the tremendous value DIS offer to the nation’s public health infrastructure, the White House announced a historic investment to expand and strengthen this workforce. Since that announcement, CDC has worked closely with recipients of the flagship Strengthening STD Prevention and Control for Health Departments (or, STD PCHD) funding to distribute the funding to support 21st century infectious disease investigation and outbreak response needs, including COVID-19, by expanding, training, and sustaining the DIS workforce.

While COVID has understandably shifted priorities and resources, work to prevent other infectious diseases has not stopped. For example, our Ending the HIV Epidemic efforts continue and, in fact, expanded in STD clinics this year. DIS are needed now, more than ever, to identify people who are at risk for or have HIV and can benefit from HIV prevention and treatment services and link them to care to end the HIV epidemic in this country. They serve as a critical, trusted resource for their clients, connecting them with public and private health care providers.

We would like to say to all DIS, thank you for your commitment, flexibility, and can-do attitude to work in communities across this nation during the current crisis and every day. Please know that we see you and all your hard work in the face of extraordinary circumstances and are deeply grateful. We encourage you to take care of yourselves too, both your physical and emotional health and wellbeing, as we continue to address this pandemic and look to the future of the DIS workforce.

With our sincerest gratitude,

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