



October 4, 2019

Dear Colleagues,

Today, October 4, 2019, we are proud to recognize the eighth annual [National Disease Intervention Specialists \(DIS\) Recognition Day](#). To our DIS work force – we extend our sincere gratitude and regard for your outstanding work fighting the ongoing increases in STDs, helping end the HIV epidemic, and for your willingness to fight hepatitis outbreaks and other public health threats. Whether you are interviewing an apprehensive patient for sexual partner information or helping a person newly diagnosed with HIV find treatment, you are the heroes of our public health workforce.

As the Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) Initiative begins, DIS are needed more than ever as patient navigators and network builders to see that patients are linked to care. DIS are a critical part of the evolving public health infrastructure connecting patients, public health, and private health care providers. These expanding roles are in addition to traditional DIS roles of notifying people of their HIV status and identifying persons at risk for HIV.

DIS are the firefighters of the field staff. They rapidly deploy to address outbreaks and to fill gaps where public health responses are needed, but local resources are insufficient. In the last year, the Division of STD Prevention (DSTDP) Field Services Branch (FSB) DIS were deployed to West Virginia to assist in an HIV outbreak response that is still ongoing. DIS staff worked in Tennessee to help in a hepatitis A outbreak; and in Philadelphia to address HIV and hepatitis outbreaks among persons who inject drugs. Beyond STD prevention, DIS are also used to address other public health needs. For example, DSTDP/FSB DIS were deployed to Sullivan County, NY, to ensure that campers and staff at 170 summer camps, encompassing several thousand people, had the required measles-mumps-rubella vaccinations.

We need DIS skills to help reverse the ongoing increases in syphilis – particularly congenital syphilis – gonorrhea, and chlamydia. Expertise in case analysis, education and counseling, contact tracing, linkage to care and treatment, and provider and community engagement is vital. However, for decades, these skills have helped stop the spread of not just STDs, but also HIV, TB and many other infectious diseases.

The work that you do every day in your regular assignments and in your exceptional public health response deployments are what boots-on-ground disease intervention is all about. We respect and support your determined, flexible efforts, adaptable attitude, and steadfast dedication to improve the nation's health. We could not achieve national goals without you. For your commitment to public health, we say to each of you 'Thank you!'

Best Regards,

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