



October 4, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

This Friday, October 6 marks the sixth [National Disease Intervention Specialist \(DIS\) Recognition Day](#). What does that mean? It means that – on this day, every year, we formally recognize and say thank you for your work, whether you are on the front lines knocking on doors and going the distance (both figuratively and literally) – or an experienced DIS supervising, mentoring and guiding a team. We know you are often the unsung heroes of public health, but we know too that your work is critical and that you, our DIS workforce, always give more than 100 percent to protect the health of this nation.

Simply put: You are key to any public health response and you make the work of public health better. With the greatest sincerity, we thank you for your tireless work to stop the spread of dangerous infections, increase access to medical care, educate the public, and link medical providers with health departments to prevent and control disease.

Your expertise and skills in communication, counseling, contact tracing, linkage to care, and provider and community engagement are unparalleled. It's what makes you an invaluable asset for STD partner services, TB outbreak response, HIV exposure notification, data-to-care activities, and emergency response to urgent threats such as Zika and Ebola.

From [battling drug-resistant gonorrhea in Hawaii](#) to [protecting babies in Kansas](#), we know that your work is 24/7. We've always understood your importance, but even recent news articles in national media are exposing more and more people to the immeasurable value of what you do. And as reported cases of STDs, including congenital syphilis, [continue to rise](#) – we also know you're the indispensable link in the prevention chain that can help us to solve this growing problem.

It is for these reasons that we remain steadfast in our commitment to strengthen and formalize your role in public health. The [DIS Certification Project](#) will ultimately help us to improve public health services by arming you with the accredited certification you so rightly deserve. This is not just a piece of paper - it will benefit the field of public health and communities, as well as open doors for you professionally. (This NEW [DIS Certification video](#) provides a great overview of the need, process, and status of the project.)

Progress continues with the Project, and, we are one step closer to having a National DIS Certification Program. In the past year, CDC, along with the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), and the

National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD) have studied different certification models: test-based, portfolio review, and unit-based models. The test-based model has been selected. It will take some time, but work is underway to seek a national credentialing organization to help design and administer the certification model.

It takes a special person to do what you do *and* to do it so well despite the challenges you face – often behind the scenes. As a DIS, you are part of a long legacy of amazing health professionals that save and change lives every single day. The National Disease Intervention Specialist Recognition Day is just one way we can say thank you for your hard work – and an opportunity to let you know how much we value and appreciate your unwavering dedication and commitment to public health. Thank you for being the difference!

Sincerely,

/Jonathan Mermin/

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Director

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/nchhstp (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/default.htm>)

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www.cdc.gov/std (<https://www.cdc.gov/std/index.htm>)