



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

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To: Local News Media

From: Central Michigan District Health Department

Release Date: For Immediate Release – April 2016

Get Free Anonymous HIV Testing, Results in 20 Minutes!

Central Michigan District Health Department Offers Free HIV Testing

Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) will be offering free HIV testing and education in an effort to help decrease the number of new HIV infections, increase the number of people who know their HIV status, and encourage early entry into HIV care following diagnosis. The free HIV testing will be focused primarily in Roscommon and Clare Counties initially.

The free testing funding was prompted by the HIV outbreak in Indiana in 2015. Following the outbreak, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted a national analysis to identify U.S. counties where people who inject drugs (PWID) appeared especially vulnerable to the rapid spread of HIV infection if introduced, as well as new or continued increases in hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection. The following 6 variables were used in the analysis: rate of drug overdose deaths, percent of unemployment, per capita income, percent white non-Hispanic population, rate of sales of prescription opioids, percent of county population for which local providers have been approved to prescribe buprenorphine.

The CDC identified 11 counties in northern Michigan with a potentially higher risk for HIV and Hepatitis C infections. Both Roscommon and Clare Counties were identified as high risk. Lorrie Youngs, Director of Health Promotion at CMDHD points out, "It's important to understand the results of the CDC's analysis do not mean an outbreak of HIV or increases in HCV transmission will occur, there are other variables involved. These findings give local public health support to enhance testing for HIV and HCV infections, as well as tools to prepare an action plan to respond to a potential PWID-related outbreak."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate 1.2 million people in the United States are living with HIV and nearly one in seven of them are not aware they are infected. There are nearly 50,000 new HIV infections annually in the United States. With no cure or vaccine for HIV, prevention is crucial in reducing infection rates. "The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 be tested for HIV," said Lorrie Youngs, Health Promotion Director at CMDHD. "Those engaging in risky behaviors such as sharing needles and having unprotected sex with multiple partners should be tested more often."

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, can lead to AIDS, or acquired immune deficiency syndrome, which was first recognized in 1981. HIV destroys blood cells that help fight off infection. HIV mainly spreads through unprotected sex, having multiple sex partners, sharing needles, syringes, or other items used to inject drugs. HIV can also be spread from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breast-feeding. HIV cannot survive outside the human body and is not spread by air, water, insects, saliva, tears, sweat, and casual contact like shaking hands, sharing dishes, closed-mouth or “social” kissing.

Three decades ago, an HIV diagnosis was nothing short of a death sentence. Today, thanks to years of research and advancements in treatments we have evolved to manageable treatment plans with little to no side effects. More like a chronic disease; with proper adherence HIV positive individuals are able to reach their full life expectancy.

CMDHD is offering free and confidential rapid HIV tests (results in 20 minutes) in Clare and Roscommon Counties. If you have ever had unprotected sex or shared needles, you could have been exposed to HIV. There’s only one way to know –GET TESTED! The rapid HIV test uses blood from a finger poke. It provides results in 20 minutes. If test results are reactive, blood will be drawn from the patient for a second test for confirmation. The free walk in tests will be offered now through September 2016. Testing times may change, and additional sites added so please call CMDHD at 989-773-5921 ext. 1464 for most current testing details.

Current testing sites include:

- Ten Sixteen Recovery Network (Clare) located at: 703 N. McEwan Street, with testing from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. on Mondays.
- Mid-Michigan Community Health Services (Houghton Lake) located at: 9249 W. Lake City Road, with testing from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. on Wednesdays.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org, LIKE Central Michigan District Health Department on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @CMiDHD.

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