



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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World AIDS Day Commemoration 2015 strives to 'get to zero'

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Every year World AIDS Day events take place across the country to raise awareness and show support for people living with HIV. "Getting to Zero" is the theme selected by the World AIDS Campaign to commemorate this year's World AIDS Day on Dec. 1. The new theme echoes the United Nations' AIDS vision of achieving "Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths."

Alabama continues to experience an HIV epidemic of moderate magnitude when compared with the experience of other states. More than 12,000 Alabama residents are known to be living with HIV infection, with at least 650 newly diagnosed cases reported each year.

Although African Americans represent only 26 percent of the state's population, they continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV, accounting for 68 percent of new cases and 65 percent of persons living with HIV. Alabama is experiencing a downward shift in the age distribution of new infections, with adolescents and young adults (13-29 years) emerging as the most affected age group.

Male-to-male sexual activity continues to be the predominant mode of exposure for HIV transmission with young African American men who have sex with men between 15-29 years identified as a particularly high-risk target group. An estimated one in six (16 percent) people living with HIV in Alabama are unaware of their infection and, thus, are not receiving medical care to manage their disease and achieve viral suppression.

Prevention education and testing remain two of the most important health activities to prevent new infections. The Alabama Department of Public Health, HIV/AIDS Division of Prevention and Care, convenes community network groups that meet, discuss local issues, and assist in deciding what issues should be prioritized in their community and the best solutions. Solutions can include HIV education awareness and testing activities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has declared "treatment as prevention" as the best way to prevent new infections. When people living with HIV receive appropriate medical care it can lead to suppressed viral loads, which means low levels of HIV in their system, creating a much healthier outcome. Persons with low viral loads also significantly decrease the chances of infecting others.

Many health care providers in the state treat people for HIV infection. Alabama also has 15 organizations and clinics, partners of ADPH, which are dedicated to providing treatment and support services for people living with HIV. Through the leadership of the HIV/AIDS Division of Prevention and Care, the health department continues to support the goal for all people in Alabama to know their HIV status, manage their health, and live their best life to “Know. Manage. Live.”

For more information call 1-800-228-0469 or visit <http://adph.org/aids/>.

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