**Example Press Release 2: Group of Related HIV Infections among Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM)**

January 1, 2018

**State Health Department Examines Group of Related HIV Infections Among Gay and Bisexual Men in Two Counties**

CITY, State — The State Department of Public Health is examining a group of related HIV infections among gay and bisexual men in County A and County B in the western part of the state. HIV data reported to the State Department of Health show:

* The total number of HIV cases in the state has been stable in recent years, with 45 reported diagnoses of HIV infection in 2017, compared to 42 in 2016 and 46 in 2015.
* However, an analysis of lab data shows a group of related infections among gay and bisexual men in County A and County B, which suggests that HIV transmission could be occurring faster than would be expected for this area.
* The lab data show there are at least 10 related infections, although there may be other related infections that have not yet been identified.

The group of related infections was discovered as part of the State Department of Public Health’s regular monitoring of HIV data and is a routine part of its work in public health.

Through interviews and other efforts, health officials hope to identify whether additional related infections exist. This will allow public health officials to better understand the factors that may be contributing to HIV transmission and attempt to determine whether others are at risk. Using this information, public health officials can work to identify whether people who are affected have access to HIV care, treatment and prevention services and can determine if additional response measures are needed.

Health officials have recommended the following actions be taken in County A and County B to diagnose additional infections and to reduce the risk of further transmission:

* Conducting targeted HIV testing among at-risk populations in County A and County B. Testing will also be done for other infections that are common in this at-risk population as well, including sexually transmitted infections and hepatitis C.
* Ensuring people with diagnosed HIV have access to appropriate care, both for HIV
* Improving access to HIV preventative medications, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP).
* Encouraging other actions to reduce the risk of HIV infection, including the use of condoms.

Community members can support the effort by being tested for HIV and by encouraging others to be tested. No-cost testing is available at County A Health Department and County B Health Department.

The State Department of Public Health encourages anyone in County A and County B who is a sexually active gay or bisexual man to get tested for HIV.

CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 be tested for HIV at least once — as well as women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. In addition, CDC recommends that people get tested for HIV at least once a year who:

* Are sexually active gay and bisexual men — with some sexually active gay and bisexual men potentially benefiting from more frequent testing (e.g. every 3 to 6 months).
* Have had sex with an HIV-positive partner.
* Have had more than one sexual partner since their last HIV test.
* Have shared syringes, needles, and/or works to inject drugs.
* Have exchanged sex for drugs or money.
* Have had another sexually transmitted disease, hepatitis, or tuberculosis.
* Or have had sex with anyone who has done anything listed above, or with someone whose sexual history is not known.

For more information, please visit www.statehealthdepartment.gov.

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