Central Michigan District Health Department

Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities

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PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

To: Local News Media

From: Central Michigan District Health Department

RE: Increase in HIV Diagnoses in Northern Michigan

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Health Alert: HIV Diagnoses Increase in Northern Michigan

Know your HIV status by getting tested.

There is an increase in the number of HIV diagnoses in northern areas of our state. Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) and Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) are encouraging residents to get tested. This increase was determined by comparing a recent report where data spanning 2019-23 was compared to data from 2014-18.

Over that time, HIV diagnoses increased 2.5 times of the average number—from 14 to 44 in this region, which includes the counties of Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Otsego, and Wexford. According to the Michigan Health Alert Network, there are several other noteworthy factors in this troubling trend:

- 44% of the new diagnoses were found at stage 3 (stage 3 = AIDS diagnosis),
- 48% of the findings since 2021 were diagnosed this year, in 2023 (13 people),
- Only 4 of 27 new diagnoses since January 2021 have HIV testing history,
- 67% were diagnosed in the emergency room or during outpatient visits,
- Almost 41% do not have an identified risk, such as reported injection drug use, and
- 78% of the new diagnosis were among residents over 30 years of age, with the majority over 40.

The study also shows that those diagnosed did not know about HIV testing or the availability of medication that can be prescribed to prevent or control the spread of the disease, a situation being addressed by local health departments throughout NMPHA's 31-county region.

"There are daily medicines to reduce the risk of getting HIV and to treat HIV infections," said Anna Reetz, CMDHD Health Promotion Supervisor. "Preventative medications minimize the risk of contracting HIV from sex by 99% and from injection drug use by at least 74%."

"In addition to prevention, we encourage people to get tested, especially if they've not been screened for HIV recently," Reetz continued. "CMDHD's Mt. Pleasant office offers rapid tests so that clients can have their results before leaving our office."

The rapid HIV test uses a finger poke to collect a blood sample. Clients may choose to be tested for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) during their appointment, as Hepatitis C, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis infections have also increased in Northern Michigan.

HIV testing using a traditional blood draw is available at all CMDHD Health Promotion offices. For more information about CMDHD's HIV/STI testing, visit https://www.cmdhd.org/testing. Appointments are available by calling 989-314-7570 ext. 1409.

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 and follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

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