FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   CONTACT: Ken Severson
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                                                                     kseverson@isdh.in.gov

GET TESTED ON NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY, JUNE 27

INDIANAPOLIS—The question is easy. The answer perhaps not so much. Have you been tested for HIV?

Saturday, June 27 marks the 20th annual National HIV Testing Day. As in the recent HIV outbreak in southeastern Indiana, getting tested can help not only yourself, but others. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in six people are living with HIV and are not aware of it. That means they are not getting the treatment they need to stay healthy and may pass the virus on to others without knowing it.

National HIV Testing Day is a reminder that when you know your HIV status, you can take care of yourself and your partners.

"Getting tested for HIV can be scary for some people," said ISDH Chief Medical Consultant Dr. Joan Duwve, but it is important to know your HIV status so you can take care of yourself and avoid spreading HIV to others. HIV can be spread when someone with HIV has sex or shares injection drug equipment with someone who does not have HIV. Everyone should get tested for HIV at least once and getting tested for HIV is easy. You can ask your doctor for a test."

The CDC recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV at least once as part of routine health care and that some people with risk factors get tested more often. Gay and bisexual men, people with more than one sex partner, people with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and people who inject drugs are at higher risk and should get tested at least once a year.

People who know their HIV status can take care of themselves and their partner(s). If you find out that you are infected with HIV (positive test), you can seek medical care and get treatment. The treatment can allow you to live a longer, healthier life. The medicine to treat HIV can also protect the health of your partners because it can reduce the risk that you can pass HIV to others.

"If you have a negative test for HIV, you can take steps to prevent getting HIV infection, such as using condoms consistently and not sharing needles or drug injection equipment," said Dr. Duwve. "If you do have risky sex or share needles for drug use after you've tested negative for HIV, you need to get tested again to make sure you are still HIV-negative."

There is free HIV testing at select locations. To find a testing location near you, visit http://www.in.gov/isdh/23727.htm. For important health and safety information, follow us on Twitter at @StateHealthIN and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/isdh1.