



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Apr. 24, 2009

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Rapid HIV Testing Now Available in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health is pleased to announce the launch of rapid HIV testing. Starting April 27, 2009, rapid HIV testing will be available free of charge at HIV counseling and test sites across the state.

“Rapid HIV testing overcomes a major obstacle in HIV testing,” said Denise Larson, HIV Prevention coordinator for the Department of Health. “It will allow people to get results in 20 minutes rather than one week. We are excited to bring this much-needed service to the public to help prevent the transmission of HIV.”

More than one million people in the United States are HIV positive, and approximately 56,300 new infections occur every year. As of Dec. 31, 2008, 441 cases of HIV/AIDS have been reported in North Dakota since HIV/AIDS surveillance began in 1984. About one-fourth of the people estimated to be HIV positive are believed to be unaware of their infections, underscoring the need for increased efforts to reach at-risk populations with HIV testing and prevention services.

Rapid testing will expand the reach of HIV testing and provide new opportunities to reach people who are at risk of becoming infected with HIV. Risky behavior includes unprotected sex, needle-sharing for drug use, or tattooing and body piercing. HIV testing is available at test sites throughout the state. The test sites are staffed by trained personnel who offer free and confidential HIV testing, counseling and referrals to those at risk. HIV can be prevented by avoiding or not engaging in risky behaviors.

To increase public knowledge of HIV and testing opportunities, a public awareness campaign entitled *You Need to Know, Get Tested* has been designed to encourage more people to get tested. This statewide multimedia campaign will begin May 1.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

For information about HIV testing and other HIV/AIDS services, call the North Dakota Department of Health HIV/AIDS Program hotline at 800.70.NDHIV or visit the program's website at www.ndhealth.gov/hiv.

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