



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### **North Dakota Observes World AIDS Day** *Department of Health Urges Testing for At-Risk People*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of World AIDS Day December 1, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging people at risk for HIV/AIDS to get tested, according to Krissie Guerard, HIV program manager for the Department of Health.

As of Dec. 31, 2009, 480 cases of HIV/AIDS have been reported in North Dakota since HIV/AIDS surveillance began in 1984. Of the 480 cases reported to the North Dakota Department of Health, 222 are still known to be living in North Dakota. 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.

“World AIDS day is a great opportunity for us to work together to help reduce stigma around HIV and promote HIV testing,” Guerard said. “If you do not know if you are infected with HIV, you could be spreading it to others. People need to know how to keep themselves from becoming infected with HIV so we can reduce the spread of this disease in our communities. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.”

Established by the World Health Organization in 1988, World AIDS Day serves as a day to heighten awareness and to focus on prevention efforts to decrease the devastating impact the HIV/AIDS epidemic has on the world. The theme for World AIDS Day 2010 is “Universal Access and Human Rights.” The theme was chosen to remind people that HIV hasn’t gone away and that there are still many things to be done in the fight against the disease.

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HIV can be prevented by avoiding or not engaging in risky behaviors, including unprotected sex, needle-sharing for drug use, or tattooing and body piercing. HIV testing is available at test sites throughout the state staffed by trained personnel who offer free and confidential HIV testing and counseling to those at risk. Rapid testing is available at most of the testing sites, and results are available within 20 minutes. A list of test sites is available at [www.ndhealth.gov/hiv](http://www.ndhealth.gov/hiv).

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](http://www.ndhealth.gov/hiv).

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