



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 10, 2010: National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Rate of new HIV Infections Among Women Continues to Increase

“It’s time for women to get tested.”

Baltimore, MD (March 10, 2010) – Approximately 30,000 Marylanders are living with HIV/AIDS; almost 40 percent of them are female according to Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). That statistic stands in distressing contrast to national figures that show that about one in four Americans living with HIV are women. This data highlights the urgency for all Marylanders to consider the importance of HIV education and testing as Maryland observes National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, today.

This year’s theme - ***“It’s time for women to get tested.”*** – is aimed at reversing the increasing numbers of women and girls with HIV.

“Awareness and testing can help reverse the heartbreaking increase of HIV infections among women and girls,” said John M. Colmers, DHMH Secretary. “Knowledge is power. The more women and girls who know their status and have the knowledge to protect themselves and others from HIV, the more power we have to eliminate HIV altogether. Healthy people mean healthy families and healthier communities.”

DHMH provides access to free confidential HIV testing, counseling, and referral services at over 400 sites across the state. These services are provided so that Marylanders can know their HIV status, understand the behavioral choices they need to make to stay negative, or how to access HIV care and treatment if needed.

According to the Centers to Disease Control and Prevention, every 35 minutes, a woman or girl tests positive for HIV in the United States. Most women in Maryland become infected with HIV through sexual contact and injection drug use. Nationally, the rate of new HIV infections among women has been increasing since it was first reported in the early 1980s; reaching a high of 349.6 people living with HIV/AIDS per 100,000 population.

“The vision of a Maryland with no new HIV infections is only possible if Marylanders get educated about HIV, get tested for HIV, and if they are positive, get into treatment for HIV,” said Heather Hauck, Director of DHMH’s Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration.

For more information about HIV/AIDS in Maryland, please visit <http://eh.dhmh.md.gov/ideah/>, or www.womenshealth.gov/NWGHAAD/about/ to learn about National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day events near you.

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