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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ENCOURAGES EDUCATION ON NATIONAL YOUTH HIV & AIDS AWARENESS DAY

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Tallahassee, Fla. –Today, the Florida Department of Health is recognizing National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day, which serves as a reminder that investing in young people’s health and education is a critical step to achieving an AIDS-free generation. It’s also an opportunity to highlight the great work young people are doing across the country to fight HIV and AIDS.

“Educating today’s young people about steps they can take to prevent HIV infection, such as using condoms the right way every time they have sex, is critical to reducing the impact of this disease on future generations,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. Celeste Philip. “It is also important for young people to get tested for HIV if they are sexually active. The department provides free HIV testing at our county health departments and in communities. We work closely with our local partners to reach teens and youth with our message of prevention, testing and treatment.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), youth aged 13 to 24 accounted for an estimated 22 percent of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States in 2014. Young gay and bisexual males are especially affected. This illustrates the importance of educating young people on prevention so they have the knowledge needed to protect themselves from infection.

Addressing HIV in youth requires that we reach young people across all spectrums to equip them with the knowledge they need to reduce their risk, make healthy decisions and get treatment and care if needed. The department’s Adolescent Health Program provides support to youth throughout the state with two main initiatives: positive youth development and sexual risk avoidance. Through positive youth development, youth learn life skills, gain self-confidence and develop a connection to their community. Through sexual risk avoidance education, students learn how to avoid teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases while building healthy relationships.

Young people are impacted by sexually transmitted diseases other than HIV. CDC estimates that youth ages 15-24 make up over one quarter of the sexually active population, but account for half of the 20 million new sexually transmitted infections that occur in the United States each year. The only way to avoid HIV and other STDs is to not have sex, however, sexually active teens can take the follow steps to lower the risk of infection:

- Use condoms the right way every time you have sex;

- Talk to your health care provider about getting testing for HIV or [locate a clinic](#) near you for free, fast and confidential testing; and
- If you test positive for HIV or other STDs, get treated right away and be sure your sexual partner is tested and treated as well.

CDC recommends that everyone age 13-64 be tested for HIV at least once as part of their routine health care. Testing can be completed at your local county health department or you can locate HIV counseling, testing and referral sites using this interactive [map](#).

For more information about National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day, visit www.amplifyyourvoice.org/nyhaad.

To learn more about the department's STD program and services, click [here](#).

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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