



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

Statement on Behalf of Lori Freeman, Chief Executive Officer on World AIDS Day 2018

Washington, DC, November 29, 2018 — On December 1st, World AIDS Day, we highlight our accomplishments, remember those who have lost their lives to HIV and AIDS, and refocus our efforts on what still must be done to end the epidemic. This year’s World AIDS Day theme, “Know Your Status,” addresses this by encouraging people to get tested and, in the event of a positive diagnosis, engage in care.

Advances in testing technologies and biomedical interventions have expanded and transformed the way we approach HIV prevention and care, but disparities remain. Local health departments are in the forefront of these efforts, working on initiatives to address the prevention and treatment of HIV and AIDS, and support work towards a cure. For example, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), as well as post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), are critical interventions to decrease the risk of HIV transmission. As well, antiretroviral therapy (ART) significantly extends and improves the quality of life for people living with HIV and is key towards moving those infected to an undetectable — and therefore untransmittable — viral load. [Over the past decade, the annual number of new HIV infections has declined](#), indicating that prevention efforts are working.

Nonetheless, significant challenges remain. The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that [progress in the HIV epidemic is uneven](#) across populations and regions. Black populations continue to have the highest rate of diagnoses, accounting for nearly half, despite representing just 12% of the U.S. population. Men who have sex with men (MSM) remain the most affected overall, representing two-thirds of new diagnoses in 2016. However, white MSM are seeing decreases (10%) in HIV diagnoses while black and Latino MSM have experienced increases of 4% and 14%, respectively. Youth make up [20% of all new HIV diagnoses](#) and are the least likely of any age group to be linked to care in a timely manner. Nearly one in ten new HIV diagnoses are [among people who inject drugs](#), and southern states account for more than half of new HIV.

Local health departments are key leaders in providing and assuring access to HIV prevention, care, and treatment for the communities they serve. They are also on the front lines of addressing the co-occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases with infections including viral hepatitis, tuberculosis, and opioid use disorder. As community health strategists, local health departments facilitate collaborations between public health, healthcare, social services, and community organizations, among others, to achieve more integrated and effective systems for HIV prevention and care. They are uniquely positioned to increase the impact of efforts to reduce HIV [by providing data](#), contributing expertise, and collaborating with community partners to support evidence-based and culturally competent interventions and clinical services. I am proud that NACCHO continues to partner with and support local communities to address the epidemic, and through the leadership, commitment, and impact of local health departments, alongside people living with HIV and other community members and partners at the local, state, national, and federal levels, we can end this epidemic.

Additional details about NACCHO's observance of World's AIDS Day can be found on its [blog](#). To learn more about NACCHO's work to reduce HIV across the nation, including the [Southern Initiative](#), [school-based prevention program capacity building planning project](#), and [evaluation of local implementation of Health is Power](#), a campaign to promote sexual health among heterosexual Black men ages 18-30, visit NACCHO's [HIV, STI, and Viral Hepatitis](#) webpage. View the results of NACCHO's recently published [pre-exposure prophylaxis implementation survey](#), and read the [updated HIV policy statement](#).

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About NACCHO

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit www.naccho.org.