

## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
December 1, 2017

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### **North Dakota Observes World AIDS Day** *Department of Health Urges all North Dakotans to Know Their HIV Status*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of World AIDS Day on December 1, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is urging all North Dakotans to know their HIV status. According to Lindsey VanderBusch, HIV program manager for the NDDoH, North Dakota has seen an over 200 percent increase in newly diagnosed cases of HIV/AIDS over the past five years and one in seven individuals infected with HIV are unaware of their infection.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 be tested at least once as part of routine health care. Everyone in this age group should know their HIV status.

“World AIDS day provides an opportunity to raise awareness about the impact the disease has on people, families and communities,” VanderBusch said. “If you don’t 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 and protect the people we love. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.”

Free HIV testing is available at test sites throughout the state, and results are available in 15 minutes. Individuals at increased risk, such as those who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, and those who have multiple sex partners with limited condom use should be tested at least annually for HIV. Individuals who have anonymous sex partners should be tested for HIV every three to six months.

To reduce your risk of HIV, condoms should be used consistently and correctly every time. Being tested for HIV and other STDs, and encouraging your partners to do the same, can also reduce your chances of getting HIV.

For additional information about HIV testing and other HIV/AIDS services, call the North Dakota Department of Health HIV/AIDS Program at 800.472.2180 or visit the program’s website at [www.ndhealth.gov/hiv](http://www.ndhealth.gov/hiv).

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