



Chicago Service Provider Launches Guide to HIV Testing

AIDS Foundation of Chicago joins other organizations in releasing guide to HIV testing

Chicago, IL - Today, Lambda Legal, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, and the Center for HIV Law and Policy launched a broadly-endorsed set of fundamental principles for HIV testing in honor of National HIV Testing Day, which is tomorrow, June 27.

Legal, medical, and service providers created a single set of principles that should guide HIV testing programs, emphasizing the fundamental principles that HIV testing must always be informed, voluntary, confidential, and supported by health care.

"We cannot lose sight of the people who will be tested," said Bebe J. Anderson, HIV Project Director of Lambda Legal. "Respect for the civil and human rights of patients must be at the heart of successful efforts to increase testing."

"Expanded testing can be valuable, but it must be well planned, high quality, and client centered," said David Ernesto Munar, Vice President of the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. "As a Colombian-American living with HIV, I know only too well that testing is about much more than just the results and must include meaningful coordination with prevention, care, and support services, especially for those who receive an HIV diagnosis."

"The evidence that thousands of diagnosed HIV-positive people are not in care and that about half of new infections unknowingly stem from newly-infected people that rapid testing can't pick up, are strong indictments of the CDC's push to speed-test everyone for HIV without counseling or ensuring people get into care," said Catherine Hanssens, Executive Director of the Center for HIV Law and Policy.

On June 27, the annual National HIV Testing Day, millions of people across the United States are encouraged to get tested for HIV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have recommended that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 get tested for HIV when they seek health care. In response to CDC's push for expanded testing, Lambda Legal, AIDS Foundation of Chicago, the Center for HIV Law and Policy, and colleague organizations are issuing fundamental principles to direct the implementation of expanded voluntary testing for HIV. The 15 guiding principles include:

- * People living with undiagnosed HIV infection must be reached and offered testing.
- * Any HIV testing program must provide the highest standard of care.
- * Everyone offered testing must be educated about HIV and the significance of positive and negative test results.
- * People who test positive for HIV antibodies must be linked to care.
- * Patients' human rights and informed consent are consistent with, and not opposed to, the goal of expanded HIV testing.
- * Expanded HIV testing must be tailored to different clinical settings, populations, and patient needs.
- * Clinicians, medical directors and other providers must receive training and education in making appropriate service referrals and linkages to care.
- * Special attention must be paid to the prevention and care needs of at-risk populations.

The guiding principles and list of endorsing organizations will be used to inform public officials and HIV advocates as they work to



expand voluntary HIV testing programs and policy at the local, state, and federal levels of government. To date, the guiding principles have been endorsed by: Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC); AIDS Foundation of Chicago; AIDS Legal Council of Chicago; the Center for HIV Law and Policy; Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP); Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, Inc. (GLAD), the Health and Education Alternative for Teens (HEAT) and Family, Adolescent, and Children Experiences at SUNY (FACES) programs of SUNY Downstate Medical Center, HIV/AIDS Legal Services Alliance (HALSA); Hudson Pride; Human Rights Watch, the Hyacinth AIDS Foundation, Lambda Legal; Sisterhood Mobilized for AIDS/HIV Research & Treatment, Inc. (SMART), and Joseph Sonnabend, M.D.

For the full report, please visit www.aidschicago.org.