



**To:** Hospitals, Emergency Rooms, Community Health Centers, College Health Centers, Local Health Departments, Community Based Organizations, Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Infectious Disease, OB/GYN, and Primary Care Providers

**From:** New York State Department of Health, AIDS Institute

**Date:** October 27, 2016

### **HEALTH ADVISORY: HIV AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES IN ERIE COUNTY**

New diagnoses of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection in residents of Erie County, New York increased nearly 20% in 2015 (N=119) compared to the 2011-14 annual average (N=101). The number of reported new diagnoses in 2016 are on pace to match 2015. The Department continues to monitor data and similar increases have not been observed in the surrounding counties.

#### **What the 2015-16 Data Show**

Men accounted for 76% of new HIV diagnoses in 2015-16 with 68% of male cases documented to occur among men who have sex with men (MSM). Eleven percent of cases have documented injection drug use, including 13% of female cases. Among female cases, 10% were newly diagnosed while pregnant. Half of the newly diagnosed cases are non-Hispanic black, a third are non-Hispanic white, and 15% are Hispanic. Notably, 18% of females and 29% of males diagnosed in 2015-16 were under the age of 25 at the time of diagnosis. While the number of new HIV diagnoses has risen, persons may be diagnosed years after their infection, so new diagnoses do not necessarily mean that transmissions are increased or that transmissions are occurring from one individual.

Additionally, the number of early syphilis and gonorrhea cases in Erie County increased 89% and 49% respectively from 2014 to 2015. While the number of cases in New York State (NYS), excluding New York City (NYC), increased during the same time period, it was not at the magnitude seen in Erie County (27%, and 32%, respectively). In 2015, Erie County ranked second for syphilis and chlamydia case rates per 100,000 residents of all counties in NYS (excluding NYC) and third for gonorrhea. Rates of HIV and STD co-infection were high, with 14% of the 2015-16 Erie County HIV cases having a diagnosis of chlamydia, gonorrhea, or syphilis of any stage. Also, 33% of Erie County HIV cases have a known history of STD infections. This is of concern because of the strong connection between untreated STDs and HIV transmission.

The public health partnership between providers, health departments and community based organizations is integral to interrupting and preventing outbreaks of HIV and STDs. Your efforts and collaboration with Health Department staff will help prevent further increases in HIV and syphilis as well as control other STDs.

## What Health Care Providers Can Do to Help Control HIV and STDs

- **Offer and perform HIV testing** for *every* patient age 13 years and older.
- **Assess risk:** Conduct a complete sexual risk and drug use assessment for *every* patient. Ask about specific behaviors, such as the number of partners, type of sex (i.e., vaginal, anal, oral), sex of partners, drugs used and route of drug ingestion to help guide laboratory testing.
- **Screen** for HIV and STDs in:
  - Sexually active MSM, at least annually
  - Sexually active persons with HIV, at least annually
  - All persons with newly diagnosed HIV
  - Persons presenting with evidence of active injection or other drug use
  - Persons diagnosed with STDs
  - Sex or needle sharing partners of a known HIV or STD case
  - Pregnant women at their first prenatal visit and during the third trimester
- **Treat promptly or link patients immediately to care and treatment** to interrupt the spread of HIV, syphilis and other STDs.
- **Facilitate partner management** to encourage your patients to refer their sex or needle sharing partners to medical care for testing, STD treatment and HIV prophylaxis.
- **Collaborate** with State and County public health personnel on partner notification efforts. Expect the Health Department to contact you and/or your patient for additional information.
- **Refer** consenting HIV positive and high risk negative patients to community based organizations (CBOs) for support services.
- **Report** newly diagnosed cases of HIV and/or AIDS infection using the Provider Portal on the NYSDOH Health Commerce System at <https://commerce.health.ny.gov> or the paper DOH-4189 Medical Provider HIV/AIDS and Partner/Contact Report Form (PRF). Completion of the PRF within 14 days of diagnosis is required by Public Health Law.
- **Report** all suspected and confirmed STD cases promptly to your local county health department. Information is available at [www.health.ny.gov/forms/doh-389.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/forms/doh-389.pdf) and [www.health.ny.gov/forms/instructions/doh-389\\_instructions.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/forms/instructions/doh-389_instructions.pdf).
- **Offer** Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to the partners of your HIV positive patients or to your HIV negative, at risk patients.

## What Community Based Organizations Can Do to Help Control HIV and STDs

- **Assess risk:** conduct a comprehensive behavioral sexual risk assessment for program participants/clients. Ask about specific behaviors, such as the number of partners, type of sex (i.e., vaginal, anal, oral), sex of partners, drugs used and route of drug ingestion to help guide laboratory testing.
- **Implement targeted client recruitment:** target agency services to identify high risk individuals who do not access health care services or who may not otherwise have access to HIV testing in clinical settings—these persons may benefit most from HIV testing services in nonclinical settings.
- **Offer testing for HIV and STDs for individuals at high risk:** conduct venue based and/or mobile testing activities to key priority populations including MSM regardless of race, young men who have sex with men (YMSM) of color, African American women, sex and needle sharing partners of HIV positive individuals, persons presenting with evidence of active injection or other drug use, persons diagnosed with STDs, sex or needle sharing partners of persons diagnosed with STDs.
- **Provide harm reduction services:** facilitate access to clean syringes and essential support services for drug users.
- **Offer linkage and navigation (L&N) services:** assist HIV positive or high risk negative individuals to obtain timely, essential and appropriate medical, prevention and support services to optimize his or her health and prevent HIV/STD/HCV transmission and acquisition.
- **Provide effective behavioral interventions:** implement prevention activities that have been shown to be successful by evaluation research.
- **Engage in condom promotion, education, and distribution:** make condoms available at no cost and increase access to condoms in ways that reduce embarrassment or discomfort when acknowledging sexual activity. Information about the New York State Condom Program is available at <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/consumers/condoms/nyscondom.htm>

## Additional Resources

**Free and confidential HIV and STD testing** is available at local health department STD clinics. For clinic locations and hours, please visit:

[www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/std/clinics/](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/std/clinics/)

**Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Non-Occupational Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP):**

[www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/general/prep](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/general/prep)

**HIV Testing Toolkit: Resources to Support Routine HIV Testing for Adults and Teens:**

[http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/testing/docs/testing\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/testing/docs/testing_toolkit.pdf)

**Information on Talking with Young People about HIV/AIDS:**

<http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/consumers/youth/index.htm>

**Information for Clinicians on a New Diagnostic Testing Algorithm for HIV Infection:**

[www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/testing/algorithm.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/testing/algorithm.htm)

**Clinical Education Initiative STD Center of Excellence** at 866-637-2342 to access expert medical consultation on diagnosis, treatment and management of STD infections.

**Bureau of HIV/AIDS Epidemiology** at 518-474-4284 for information and assistance with HIV reporting.

**Bureau of STD Prevention and Epidemiology** at 518-474-3598 for information and assistance with STD reporting.

**Local Health Department and NYSDOH Regional Contacts for Partner Services:**

NYSDOH Western Region (Buffalo) at 716-847-4511

Erie County Department of Health at 716-858-7683

NYSDOH Greater Rochester Region at 585-423-8095

Monroe County Department of Public Health at 585-753-5391