

News Releases

DHEC News Release: National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day events scheduled

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 4, 2013

National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day events scheduled

COLUMBIA, S.C. - South Carolina marks the 13th annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on Feb. 7 and events are planned across the state to highlight the impact of the disease on African-American communities, the state Department of Health and Environmental Control announced today.

"South Carolina continues to have a disproportionate number of HIV/AIDS cases among African-Americans," said Lisa Waddell, M.D. and deputy director for Preventive Services at DHEC. "To mark this National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, we'll partner with community-based organizations to sponsor activities such as free HIV testing and HIV educational forums at housing communities and other outreach settings."

Dr. Waddell said various tests will be offered throughout the state, including the traditional blood draw method and the rapid test, which provides preliminary results in less than an hour.

"It is important to know your HIV status to reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others," said Carmen Julious, executive director of Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services, one of DHEC's HIV prevention partners in the Midlands. "Testing is free, confidential, and can be done in one hour. Almost 7,000 African-American men in South Carolina are living with HIV. Residents can help curb that number by being tested."

Testing is at the core of this initiative as it is hoped that African-Americans will mark Feb. 7 of every year as their annual or bi-annual day to get tested for HIV, Dr. Waddell said. She also urged individuals, families, agencies and communities to learn the facts about HIV, getting tested, becoming involved and helping link persons with HIV to treatment.

According to DHEC statistics:

African-Americans represent 28 percent of the state's population, yet account for 76 percent of the recently diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases in South Carolina.

African-Americans have a case rate about 10 times greater than whites in South Carolina.

For more information about National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day events, including local HIV testing sites, call DHEC's South Carolina AIDS/STD Hotline at 800-322-AIDS (800-322-2437), or visit DHEC's web site at: <http://www.scdhec.gov/stdhiv> <<http://www.scdhec.gov/stdhiv>>.

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