



## Press Release

**For immediate release:** Feb. 6, 2018

**Contact:** Monifa Thomas-Nguyen

Phone 312-864-5268 or 312-520-7098

### **National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is Feb. 7**

Residents are encouraged to learn more, get tested, and get treatment

In recognition of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) officials are encouraging suburban Cook County residents to get educated about how they can prevent getting HIV, get tested and get treatment if they have been diagnosed with the virus. Now in its 18<sup>th</sup> year, National Black HIV/AIDS is a day to increase awareness about human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) among African Americans.

“This year’s theme is, ‘Stay the Course, the Fight is Not Over!’ and that is what we want our residents to do,” said Terry Mason, MD, CCDPH Chief Operating Officer. “Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, can prevent HIV from spreading. Together with other strategies, these can help us get to zero: zero new HIV infections and zero people living with HIV who are not receiving treatment.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of new HIV diagnoses among African Americans has decreased in recent years, thanks to HIV prevention efforts. HIV diagnoses fell 20% from 2011 to 2015 among black women, and diagnoses among young African American gay and bisexual men (ages 13 to 24) are now stable, after years of increases.

#### ***But there is still much work to do.***

- In 2016, African Americans accounted for 44% of HIV diagnoses, despite making up 12% of the U.S. population. In suburban Cook County, blacks accounted for 55% of HIV diagnoses despite making up 16% of the population.
- In suburban Cook County, 52% of the African Americans that were diagnosed were between the ages of 20 and 29 at the time of diagnosis.

“Unfortunately, too many people live with HIV for years before they know it,” said Dr. Mason. “Which means they aren’t getting the benefits of early treatment. If people living with HIV take HIV medicine as prescribed, they can stay healthy for many years. HIV medicine also helps prevent transmission to others.”

CCDPH is encouraging residents to “stay the course” by taking the following actions:

- **Get educated and involved.** Learn the facts about HIV and share this lifesaving information with others.
- **Get tested.** Knowing your HIV status gives you important information to help keep you and your partner healthy. CDC recommends that everyone gets tested for HIV at least once, and those at high risk should get tested at least once a year.
- **Protect yourself and your partner.** Today, we have effective tools to prevent people from getting HIV and help people living with HIV stay healthy. If you have been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, start treatment as soon as possible. The most important thing you can do is to take HIV medicine as prescribed by your doctor.
- **Learn more.** There are many other actions you can take to prevent getting or transmitting HIV.
  - For more information or to find a testing site near you visit: [www.cookcountypublichealth.org/sexual-health/hiv-aids](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/sexual-health/hiv-aids) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).
  - If you are uninsured, live in Cook County, and are eligible for Medicaid, you can apply for CountyCare. If you are not signed up for Medicaid or if you are unsure, call 312-864-8200.

###