



MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Department Strongly Stresses Importance of HIV Testing

(Mason City) – The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health is strongly encouraging HIV testing for individuals at high risk of contracting the disease.

Last week, the Iowa Department of Public Health stated in a press release that the 2016 HIV Disease Surveillance Report showed that Iowa experienced the largest number of people diagnosed with HIV in nearly 30 years.

In 2016, 136 Iowans were diagnosed with HIV. People aged 25 through 44 years continue to make up the largest proportion (54 percent) of those diagnosed with HIV. The number of youth and young adults aged 15 through 24 years diagnosed with HIV fell from an all-time high of 33 in 2015 to 28 (21 percent) last year. Men who have sex with men (MSM) remained the leading exposure category for HIV in Iowa

HIV is a virus that causes AIDS. HIV weakens several body systems and destroys the body's immune system, making it easier for life threatening cancers or infections to invade the body.

"HIV is a preventable disease," said Sam Smith, Disease Prevention Specialist at the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health, "Protecting yourself and getting tested are key to preventing HIV." Presently there is a medication to help in the prevention of HIV. PrEp is a once a day pill to prevent the HIV infection from someone who may be exposed to the virus. In order to know if you are at high risk of becoming infected with HIV, you should seek testing and discuss your risk factors with an HIV counselor. At the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health HIV testing is available to anyone 14 years of age and older. There are no income guidelines to meet and you do not have to be a resident of Cerro Gordo County.

For more information about HIV testing or to schedule an appointment, contact Sam at 641-421-9309, or visit our website at www.cghealth.com.

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