

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 26, 2006

**Illinois reports decrease in AIDS cases reported in Illinois in 2005**  
***The Governor's BASUAH campaign aggressively addresses at risk populations through education, prevention and testing***

CHICAGO – Dr. Eric E. Whitaker, state public health director, today announced the Illinois 2005 HIV/AIDS statistics. In 2005, the number of reported AIDS cases declined by three percent from 1,410 in 2004 to 1,366 in 2005. Illinois also saw a decrease of new infections in 2005 from the previous year.

"The message is simple--if you don't know your HIV status, get tested. If you find out you are HIV positive, there are new medicines and better therapies that can delay the progression from HIV to AIDS, which is one of the reasons we are seeing AIDS numbers decline in Illinois," said Dr. Whitaker. "Get tested – what you don't know can kill you."

In an effort to encourage people to get tested on National HIV Testing Day (Tuesday, June 27, 2006), Whitaker visited the Gift House Inc., an organization that performs HIV counseling and testing and is funded by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

"I'm delighted that Dr. Whitaker is taking this opportunity to remind us that the 3 percent decrease in infections should be welcomed with a redoubled effort at prevention and testing," said Danny Davis, U.S. Representative – 7th District. "In some communities, including the African American community, infection rates continue to increase. Tomorrow, Tuesday, June 27 is National Test Day. If you don't know your status - get tested. If you don't get tested tomorrow, get tested on Wednesday or Thursday. Don't put it off any longer -- get tested."

"We see a variety of clients at The Gift House who come in for counseling or testing, including men who have sex with men, which is the highest mode of transmission," said Gift House co-founder and co-owner Rossana Weathersby. "Some people are too embarrassed to come in for information or testing, but it is so important to know your HIV status, especially for the high risk group of men who have sex with men and for African Americans who tend to see higher infection rates."

On September 15, 2005, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich launched the BASUAH (Brothers And Sisters United Against HIV/AIDS) campaign to address the increase of HIV/AIDS in the African-American community. BASUAH focuses on education, prevention and testing and targets African

Americans to specifically address the increase in HIV cases reported within that community. In

2005, African Americans comprised approximately 50 percent of all reported HIV/AIDS cases in Illinois, 1,949 cases out of 3,906, while they only represent 15 percent of the state's population. BASUAH's goal is to decrease this disparity. In 2004, African Americans comprised 54 percent of all reported HIV/AIDS cases in Illinois, 2,120 cases out of total of 3,933.

In 2005, African Americans accounted for the largest number of AIDS cases, 52 percent or 713, Caucasians 30 percent or 410, Hispanics 16 percent or 217 and people in the category "other" is two percent or 26.

The rate of new HIV reported cases in Illinois is slowing. While there was a slight increase in the number of reported HIV cases in 2005, the rate of new HIV cases has dropped. In 2005, there were 2,540 reported HIV cases compared to the 2,523 cases reported in 2004. This slight increase in the number of reported HIV cases represents a less than one percent increase in the rate. The rate is down compared with an almost 16 percent increase in reported HIV cases from 2003 to 2004. African Americans accounted for almost half of the reported cases with 1,236 (49 percent), although they represent just 15 percent of the state's population. Caucasians consisted of 31 percent of the reported cases, Hispanics made up 13 percent and other is seven percent.

Of the reported HIV cases among African Americans, 65 percent were male and 35 percent were females. African American females comprised 70 percent of the overall female reported HIV cases. African American males comprised 42 percent of the overall male reported HIV cases.

In 2005, among the approximately 3,900 HIV/AIDS cases reported, 50 percent of these were among African Americans. By mode of transmission, 43 percent of reported cases were among men who have sex with men; by gender, 22 percent were among females.

Of the cases reported in 2005, men having sex with men remains the leading mode of transmission in Illinois with 1751 cases. Overall, among reported cases, injection drug use transmission decreased from 574 in 2004 to 431 in 2005. In July 2003, Gov. Blagojevich signed landmark HIV prevention legislation allowing adults at least 18 years of age to purchase and possess up to 20 syringes from a pharmacy without a prescription. Those purchasing syringes are provided with Department approved drug treatment and when purchase syringes they get brochure about needle use and prevention education materials. National research finds that by allowing the legal purchase of syringes, fewer people are sharing needles, which is one of the risk behaviors for becoming infected with HIV.

Over the last year, the Wellness on Wheels mobile health van has stopped in 44 locations across the state. Visitors to the Wellness van can immediately have health screenings including HIV, Hepatitis B and C, breast and cervical cancer screenings and blood pressure and cholesterol tests. People visiting the van can receive their HIV results within half an hour because of HIV/AIDS rapid testing in which the State adopted rules on February 3, 2006. Approximately 41,400 people have received educational information and 1,183 HIV tests have been administered through BASUAH.

The State has also worked with African American churches and their youth ministries to establish peer networks that encourage HIV testing as part of the BASUAH campaign. Approximately 70 congregations have distributed BASUAH literature.

Programs targeting communities of color, which include African Americans, Hispanics and Asians, are a top priority of the state's HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. For fiscal year 2007, the Governor has budgeted \$3.2 million for Minority AIDS Prevention.

Funding for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) was boosted by \$2.5 million in fiscal year 2007 to total \$41 million in order to allow more people with HIV or AIDS, who meet eligibility requirements, to be served and to increase access to life sustaining medicines.

Governor Blagojevich also signed House Bill 4302, sponsored by State Representative Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), which adds HIV/AIDS to the list of diseases covered under the Illinois Cares Rx program, which provides prescription drug assistance to low-income seniors and persons with disabilities with certain illnesses or conditions. For people who qualify for both Medicare Part D and Illinois Cares Rx Basic, HIV/AIDS drugs covered by

Medicare Part D will be “wrapped” so that these individuals will have small affordable co-payments.

In addition, by ensuring these seniors and persons with disabilities are covered by Illinois Cares Rx, the IDPH, which previously covered the drugs for this population through its AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) program, will save \$3.5 million dollars in fiscal year 2007 and the state would spend 63 percent less per Medicare eligible client than it would spend through ADAP. By shifting costs from ADAP to Illinois Cares Rx, the state would reduce its future outlays for AIDS care by more than \$1.5 million per year.

On average, ADAP spends \$12,200 per year to provide HIV drugs for each client. An estimated 195 ADAP clients, with an annual income roughly between \$13,000 to \$19,000, are eligible for both ADAP and Medicare, but cannot afford Medicare’s steep out-of-pocket prescription drug costs.

“The coordination of ADAP and Medicare is a first step in trying to manage the increased utilization in the ADAP program. Our ability to transfer some of our ADAP clients over to Medicare and continue to provide wrap-around services to ADAP clients will ultimately result in a win-win situation for HIV positives living in Illinois,” said Rep. Feigenholtz. “We want this process to be seamless for the client...that is key.”

For more information call the Illinois HIV/AIDS and STD hotline 1-800-243-2437 during the following hours: M-F 9:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. Weekends 11:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m. or visit [www.basuah.org](http://www.basuah.org).

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