

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UNVEILS
COMPREHENSIVE HIV PREVENTION PLAN AND HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIOLOGY PROFILE**

December 1 is World AIDS Day

(Richmond, Va.) – Public and private healthcare planners in Virginia now have two new tools to help them plan and evaluate prevention and healthcare services for Virginians. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has completed its 2008 Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan and its companion, the Epidemiology Profile: HIV/AIDS in Virginia.

The prevention plan is the result of work completed between 2004 and 2007 by 54 current or former members of the Virginia HIV Community Planning Committee and VDH. It replaces the plan developed in 2003, and combines science, data and the wisdom of affected communities to identify effective prevention strategies and reduce the greatest number of new infections.

“Our community partners contributed real-life perspectives that helped us develop a thorough understanding of the populations at risk. That enhanced the efforts to identify unmet needs, research initiatives and effective prevention measures,” said Elaine Martin, director of community services in VDH’s Division of Disease Prevention.

The Epidemiology Profile describes the distribution and impact of HIV/AIDS in Virginia. It provides data and information for both prevention and care providers to plan services and allocate resources for HIV prevention. The Epidemiology Profile highlights the scope, indicators of risk, patterns of HIV service utilization and the number and characteristics of HIV infected persons in Virginia.

There are 18,587 people in Virginia known to be living with HIV/AIDS. Based on estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over 6,000 additional Virginians may not know they are infected. The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Virginia has increased steadily, mainly due to improvements in life expectancy for infected persons, and these improvements are largely a result of advances in drug therapies and efforts to ensure access to care. At the end of 2006, the rate of people in Virginia living with HIV/AIDS was 351 per 100,000 men and 125 per 100,000 women. Sixty-two percent of those living with HIV/AIDS were black, followed by 31 percent who were white and 6 percent who were Hispanic. That same year, the largest group of people living with HIV/AIDS was Virginians between 30 and 39 years old.

“The plan and profile are useful for planners at both the state and local levels,” said Martin. “They provide city and county governments, community organizations, health care planners and educators with current data they can use to create effective prevention and care plans to protect the people in their localities.”

Both the plan and profile are on the VDH Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov.