

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW METHOD PROVIDES CLEARER PICTURE OF RECENT NATIONAL HIV INFECTION

New Virginia Data Expected Soon

(Richmond, Va.) A new surveillance method unveiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), estimates 56,300 people nationally acquired HIV in 2006. The CDC arrived at the new estimate by incorporating a lab test that can distinguish between recent and long-term infections. This new technology provides a more accurate picture of the spread of new HIV infections in the United States and helps to more clearly identify groups who are contracting HIV and where to focus prevention efforts.

Virginia is one of 22 sites used to calculate the national estimate and demographic breakdown. Using this new technology, the CDC estimates that 1,200 people in Virginia acquired HIV in 2006. “We are receiving technical guidance from the CDC that will allow us to use the same statistical model at the state level to produce more detailed data in the coming weeks,” said Kathryn Hafford, director of the division of disease prevention within the Virginia Department of Health. “This data will tell us which populations in Virginia are most impacted by HIV.”

While this estimate provides a clearer picture of the epidemic, HIV continues to spread and remains a serious public health threat. Prevention programs in Virginia have been particularly successful in addressing the spread of HIV among certain groups. Between 2001 and 2006, HIV diagnoses among injection drug users declined 66% and diagnoses among heterosexuals declined 57%. Since 1994, there has been a 91% decrease in infants born with HIV in Virginia. This prevention success is due to HIV testing of pregnant women and HIV treatment for HIV-infected pregnant women and their newborns.

“Our success stories demonstrate the importance of targeted prevention and intervention. These programs must be given the financial support necessary to offer full coverage of services that we know work in order to have the greatest impact possible.”

The VDH division of disease prevention manages 38 contracts with community-based organizations to provide HIV prevention services including individual risk-reduction counseling, rapid HIV testing, scientifically-based individual group and community-level interventions, and basic and intensive street outreach.

For more information, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov