



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

Thursday December 1 is World AIDS Day

Public Health's Mobile Unit is a Model for the State, Bringing HIV Counseling, Testing and Other Vital Health Services to Those Most at Risk

December 1 is World AIDS Day, and the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District is at the forefront of bringing HIV counseling and testing to individuals and communities at risk. This month the Illinois Department of Public Health recognized the Health District's pioneering program to use mobile health units to bring HIV testing, counseling and other vital health services to those who might not otherwise get these services.

In a press release this month, Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Eric E. Whitaker praised the Health District's Wellness on Wheels (WOW) program, which was launched in 2002 in collaboration with Carle Foundation Hospital. The program was later expanded to include Christie Clinic's mobile unit and this summer the Health District acquired its own mobile health unit, dubbed WOWee.

Wellness on Wheels offers blood pressure and blood sugar tests; cholesterol tests; vaccinations; Hepatitis A & B immunizations; Hepatitis C tests; HIV counseling and testing; tests and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases; pregnancy tests; help with KidCare and FamilyCare health insurance applications and health information and supplies. Program staff includes nurses, counselors, health educators, and Spanish-language translators.

The mobile units serve hundreds of clients a year at various locations in Champaign, Vermilion and Macon Counties.

"We are committed to providing testing services to those most at-risk, where and when they need them," said Julie Pryde, director of Public Health's Infectious Disease Prevention & Management division and founder of the state's mobile HIV/AIDS outreach programs.

Citing the success of the Health District mobile programs, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich announced in September that the state would bring many of the same mobile services to communities in eight other counties that lack medical resources.

"This is an expansion of the highly successful Wellness on Wheels van currently serving the Champaign and Decatur areas, bringing HIV and STD testing to residents of public housing complexes, shelters and the homeless," read a press release from the state health department in September.

Since 1981, more than 30,000 Illinoisans have been diagnosed with acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Of that figure, about 53 percent have died. The number of Illinois cases is the sixth highest total in the U.S., trailing New York, California, Florida, Texas and New Jersey.

On December 1 the Health District's Division of Infectious Disease Prevention & Management will offer HIV counseling and testing in Urbana, Champaign and Decatur:

- From 8-noon and 1-4 at the Health District satellite office, 217 N. Broadway, in Urbana. Call (217) 239-7827 to make an appointment.
- From 8-noon and 1-4 at the Health District Main Building, 710 N. Neil St., Champaign (as part of the Health District's weekly sexually transmitted disease clinics). Walk-ins are seen on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information, or for a schedule of HIV counseling and testing services in Decatur on December 1, please call (217) 239-7827.

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