



News Release

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Catherine Cioffi
Communications Director
Office - (914) 995-2932
Cell- (914) 954 -5579
CCioffi@westchestergov.com

WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT OBSERVES WORLD AIDS DAY DECEMBER 1

Westchester County Offers Testing and Preventive Services

(White Plains, NY) – On World AIDS Day, the Westchester County Department of Health encourages residents to show support for people living with a positive HIV status, and honor the more than 32 million people worldwide who have died from an AIDS-related illness by working to address and reduce HIV stigma.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “Advancements in HIV treatment have made it possible for people with HIV to live healthy lives and prevent transmission to others. Research has shown that when a person with HIV is on treatment and maintains an undetectable viral load, they will not transmit HIV to their sexual partners. Greater awareness of this can foster a more supportive environment free of stigma. Everyone should know their HIV status, and free testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases and preventive services are available through the County Health Department.”

Free rapid and regular HIV testing and PrEP are offered by the Health Department at 134 Court Street in White Plains. Residents can call 995-5800 for dates and times or view the clinic schedule at www.westchestergov.com/health.

Through a partnership with the Urban League of Westchester, the Health Department also offers free, rapid HIV testing on-site at the Syringe Exchange Program, 4 Wilson Place, Mount Vernon. PrEP is a preventive treatment that when taken daily can prevent HIV in people who are most at risk, and PEP or post-exposure prophylaxis is medicine taken to prevent HIV after a possible exposure.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer encourages residents to wear a red ribbon to commemorate World AIDS Day, and the fight against HIV stigma.

Latimer said: “Together with the advocates and healthcare workers who provide compassionate care, we can champion a supportive community that can reduce stigma and improve health outcomes for all those affected by this disease.”

An estimated 1.2 million Americans are living with HIV, and 13 percent of them are not aware of their diagnosis and need for testing, according to HIV.GOV. HIV continues to have a disproportionate impact on

racial and ethnic minorities and gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Although there are effective treatments for HIV, there is still no cure for HIV and no vaccine to prevent it.

HIV stigma can negatively impact access to HIV testing and prevention services like PrEP. For people with HIV, stigma can create barriers to HIV treatment, viral suppression and other medical care. Westchester County will champion supportive and safe communities and health care settings to reduce stigma, and help improve health outcomes for people with HIV.

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