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Critical Advisory Letter, April 2010: STDs on the rise in Miami-Dade County

New data from 2009 indicates that infectious syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia are on the rise in Miami-Dade County. These increases represent a ten-year high of reported chlamydia and infectious syphilis cases. Below is a description of changes in the number of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) in Miami-Dade County.

Infectious Syphilis

- From 2006 to 2009, there was a 53% increase in infectious syphilis cases, from 204 to 313 cases.
- Seventy-three per cent (73%) of infectious syphilis cases in 2009 were self-identified men who have sex with men (MSM), and 60% of these men were HIV positive.
- The number of adolescents being infected with syphilis is increasing.

Chlamydia

- From 2006-2009, there was a 64% increase in reported *Chlamydia trachomatis* infections, from 5,069 to 8,330 cases.
- 71% of the Chlamydia cases reported in 2009 were among women, of whom 73% were between 15 and 24 years of age.

Gonorrhea

- There was a 24% increase from 2006 to 2009 in reported *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* infections, from 1,892 to 2,350 cases.
- Although increases in gonorrhea were observed across all racial/ethnic groups, in 2009 the incidence of gonorrhea was 9 times higher among African Americans and 5 times higher for Hispanics when compared to Whites.

STDs pose a threat to the general health, well-being, and reproductive capacity of a sizeable number of people and also facilitates HIV transmission. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of reported STDs represents only a fraction of actual cases since in many instances reportable STDs go undetected and remain under reported. Chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis are all easily diagnosed, treated and cured. However, many people have no symptoms, do not recognize symptoms, or ignore them and therefore do not seek a medical evaluation and/or treatment.

Recent reports and trends in STDs in Miami-Dade County point to the need for more sex education and focus on HIV/STD prevention for teens and young adults. Florida's Bureau of STD Prevention and Control launched a new interactive web site on April 1, 2010 to educate teens on STDs (www.FaceITFlorida.com). InSPOT (www.inSPOT.org/Florida), a safe and free website, allows a person who has tested positive for an STD to send a free, anonymous e-card to their sexual partner(s) informing them of their need to get tested.

It is important for our community that we engage in frank communications regarding sexual health, risk behavior, and consequences to reverse these troubling trends.

Sincerely,

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