



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DRAFT**

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**Board of Supervisors Approves Expansion  
of HIV/AIDS Testing in Santa Clara County**  
*Nearly 25% of People Infected with HIV/AIDS Do Not Know*

SAN JOSE, CA—In response to increasing rates of HIV infection in Santa Clara County, the Board of Supervisors today approved plans to expand HIV/AIDS testing for high-risk populations in the county. Once the plan is implemented, expanded testing will occur between January and October 2007.

The Center for Disease Control and local estimates show that approximately 25% of those living with HIV/AIDS are unaware of their condition. In Santa Clara County that would be 898 people. Testing more individuals to identify those who may not be aware of their status will enable them to seek early treatment and supportive care.

“There are two benefits from expanding our testing,” said Supervisor Jim Beall, Chair of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. “It will cut down the number of people who unknowingly infect others. And it will help Santa Clara County to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS infection.”

The Public Health Department developed the HIV/AIDS Testing Expansion Implementation Plan, working with the HIV Planning Council and the HIV Prevention Community Planning Group to incorporate their knowledge and priorities into the plan. The goal of the program is to reduce the prevalence and incidence of HIV/AIDS in at-risk residents through testing, counseling, referral and treatment.

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The community-based alternative-testing sites will use rapid testing technology to provide voluntary, anonymous and confidential free HIV testing, with the goal of making rapid testing accessible to the most at-risk populations in the county.

To begin implementing the program, the Public Health Department will select three to five community-based organizations that are familiar with these at-risk populations. They will be organizations that have roots in the community, knowledge and a relationship with the target populations, and have the capacity to administer rapid HIV testing and provide counseling.

As part of the plan, the Board of Supervisors allocated \$75,000 in funding for the Public Health Department to conduct social marketing. More accurate numbers of those living with HIV/AIDS will allow the County to receive appropriate federal and state funding for services.

“This effort will reach across cultural, economic and social boundaries,” said Supervisor Blanca Alvarado, Vice Chair of the Health and Hospital Committee.

Priority at-risk populations for the new testing sites will include: men who have sex with men, female sexual partners (often unsuspecting) of men who have sex with men, and transgender persons and injection drug users. Within this population, target groups are people of color, sex workers and youth. Geographic areas that have been identified as a priority are: the City of San Jose; North County residents in Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Palo Alto and Los Altos, which make up the second highest percentage of reported cases behind San Jose; and South County residents which currently make up the smallest number of reported HIV cases to date.

Through the program, an additional four certified test counselors will provide counseling about high risk behavior and administer rapid HIV/AIDS tests. If the tests are positive, they will be sent to the Public Health Laboratory for confirmation. Nearly 7,000 additional HIV/AIDS tests will be conducted in the target population, of which an estimated 2% (140) is expected to test positive for the HIV antibodies.

“Expanded testing is necessary to reach the 25% of the population unaware that they are infected with HIV/AIDS,” said Santa Clara County Health Officer Marty Fenstersheib, MD, MPH. “You can’t treat a condition unless you know it exists.”

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