
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 20, 2015

CONTACT: Amy Reel
(317) 431-3792

areel@isdh.in.gov

STATE RAMPS UP RESPONSE TO HIV IN SOUTHEASTERN INDIANA

INDIANAPOLIS—State health officials reported today a total of 55 confirmed cases of HIV and 13 additional preliminary positive cases related to the outbreak in southeastern Indiana that was announced in February. All cases are linked to injection drug abuse of the prescription opioid painkiller, opana, with some individuals also reporting sexual intercourse as a possible mode of transmission.

"I am deeply troubled by this outbreak, and stopping it is a top priority for our department," said State Health Commissioner Jerome Adams, M.D., M.P.H. "We are engaging local, state, and national partners to determine where we can most effectively focus our efforts. Extra care is being taken to invest resources in getting people off drugs and into treatment, since drug abuse is the clear driving force behind this outbreak."

The Indiana State Department of Health is working closely with local health officials, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drug treatment facilities, local medical providers, and other State agencies to contain the outbreak and get HIV positive individuals treatment. Specifically, the State Health Department has requested a medical team from CDC to help with following up on contacts of HIV positive individuals and analyzing data. The team, which will arrive in Scott County on Monday, consists of two medical doctors and one epidemiologist.

Other efforts include the creation of a public awareness campaign created specifically in response to this outbreak, called You Are Not Alone, which focuses on drug abuse, safe sex, needle disposal and HIV testing and treatment. Viewers are encouraged to contact the HIV services hotline or addiction hotline for local treatment and care resources. The campaign will include digital and social media ads, billboards along the Interstate 65 corridor, radio, and will be featured in the free local paper, The Giveaway. Social media

ads will begin today, with the rest of the campaign rolling out over the next two weeks and lasting three months. The campaign can be seen in southeastern Indiana counties.

State health officials recommend that all Hoosiers know their HIV status. The best way for an individual to learn their HIV status is by getting tested by a health care professional. Hoosiers in the southeastern portion of the state, especially individuals who have engaged in high-risk behavior such as needle sharing and unprotected sex, are advised to get tested and then re-tested after about two to three months because HIV can take up to three months to appear in a person's system.

To help reduce risk of HIV infection, avoid:

- injection drug use;
- sharing or re-using needles;
- engaging in unprotected sex; and,
- engaging in sex with commercial sex workers.

For HIV testing locations and information about HIV Care Coordination, individuals are encouraged to call the ISDH HIV Services Hotline at (866) 588-4948.

Individuals seeking help with substance abuse should call the national 24-hour addiction hotline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). This hotline provides confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental health and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. Callers can also order free publications and other information.

To learn more about the link between HIV infection and drug abuse, visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse at <http://hiv.drugabuse.gov/index.html>.

Visit the Indiana State Department of Health at www.StateHealth.in.gov. Follow the Indiana State Department of Health on Twitter at [@StateHealthIN](https://twitter.com/StateHealthIN) and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/isdh1.

Hoosiers who do not have health care coverage or access to a doctor are encouraged to check availability for the new Healthy Indiana Plan—HIP 2.0—by visiting www.HIP.IN.gov or calling 1-877-GET-HIP-9.

###