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State Health Department urges Nevadans to Protect their Sexual Health by Talking, Testing and Getting Treated

Carson City, NV – This week, April 10-16, the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH) and the Office of Public Health Investigations and Epidemiology (OPHIE) are acknowledging Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Awareness Week in Nevada. During this week the Division is taking time to raise awareness about STDs and how they impact the lives and communities of Nevada and ensure people have the tools and knowledge to prevent, test for, and treat STDs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are more than 20 million new STD infections annually in the United States. While STDs are increasing across many groups, the 2020 STD data shows that some racial and ethnic minority groups, gay and bisexual men, and youth continue to experience higher rates of STDs. This trend shows that longstanding factors, such as lack of access to regular medical care, discrimination, and stigma, continue to stand in the way of quality sexual health care for everyone.

When STDs go untreated, patients are at risk for severe health problems, like infertility, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth in infants, and an increased risk of HIV. Some STDs such as human papillomavirus (HPV) can be prevented before people are exposed by getting immunized. Bacterial STDs such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis can be cured and viral STDs such as HIV can be treated.

The 2020 STD Surveillance Report published this week by the CDC provides a clearer picture of the impact of COVID-19 on the U.S. STD epidemic. Although reported STD cases decreased during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, most resurfaced by the end of that year. In 2020, Nevada saw 14,739 chlamydia cases, 6,364 gonorrhea cases, 737 primary and secondary syphilis cases, 496 early syphilis cases, and 46 congenital syphilis. Young people ages 15-24, make up almost half of the new STD cases each year. This makes educational outreach in schools and on college campuses incredibly important. This makes educational outreach in schools and on college campuses incredibly important.

DPBH and OPHIE are committed to reducing the cases of STDs in Nevada through education, testing, and treatment.

“We can slow down the spread of STDs through routine testing, and normalizing talking about sexual health,” said Elizabeth Kessler, STD and Adult Viral Hepatitis Program Manager for OPHIE. “STD testing and treatment are critical and help to avoid serious complications, and testing should be a normal part of our health maintenance to keep ourselves and our partners safe. We hope to empower Nevadans not to be afraid to go get tested and treated for STDs or talk to their partners about their sexual health.”

More information and resources on Sexually Transmitted Diseases and programs are available at dpbh.nv.gov. Data and other resources are available on the CDC website.