



Media Advisory – For Immediate Release

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***Health officials urge action on
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day***

MILWAUKEE – In recognition of National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on Feb. 7, 2013, the City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) and AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin (ARCW) are issuing a call to action to battle the serious challenges of the AIDS epidemic among blacks in Milwaukee.

“The impact of HIV on Milwaukee’s black community is devastating,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “We have the tools and knowledge to prevent the spread of HIV, and it begins with a simple step: Getting tested. It is critically important that all individuals get tested and know their HIV status.”

Unfortunately, stigma related to HIV status and uncertainty related to where to access HIV health care remain significant reasons why people do not get tested. In Milwaukee, both the MHD and ARCW offer anonymous and confidential HIV testing and counseling services. As the first community-based clinic statewide to gain official recognition as a medical home for HIV patients, ARCW is also able to immediately link patients who are HIV positive into robust health care and social services programs.

“Anyone with HIV can come to ARCW and receive the medical, dental, mental health care and medications they need to live a long life with HIV, regardless of their ability to pay for their care. And, with our integrated social services, we can help our patients overcome hunger, homelessness, and discrimination so that they can focus their energy on fighting their HIV,” said ARCW President and Chief Executive Officer Mike Gifford. “Our clinic offers all of our services in a sensitive, nonjudgmental way that puts the patient in the center of everything we do.”

In Milwaukee, the call comes as the HIV infection rate among black men (64.8/100,000) is eight times higher than it is for Caucasian men (7.9/100,000), and almost nine times higher for black women (13.0/100,000) than it is for Caucasian women (1.5/100,000). Among young black men, especially young black men who have sex with other men (MSM), the rates of HIV incidence are increasing more rapidly than in any other demographic (Wisconsin HIV Surveillance System). Nearly one-third (31%) of all new HIV cases in Milwaukee are among young black MSM.

On Feb. 7, ARCW is expanding its testing hours for Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day at its HIV prevention center at 37th and Wisconsin and at local testing sites. ARCW is also reaching out to black churches, civic groups, and other health care providers and to let them know HIV testing and education specialists are available to provide a range of prevention and education services.

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