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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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### **State reports increase in new HIV, syphilis cases**

*Testing encouraged for early detection*

ANCHORAGE — The Department of Health and Social Services HIV/STD Program is reporting an increase in reported cases of HIV and syphilis during 2011. The new HIV cases were clustered in the Fairbanks area, while the syphilis outbreak is mainly concentrated in Anchorage.

An analysis of the data shows the HIV infection case count in Fairbanks spiked in 2011, with a total of nine cases of HIV reported between Jan. 1, 2011, and Jan. 31, 2012. Of the nine cases, eight involved men having sex with men, seven of whom reported meeting anonymous sexual partners online. In addition, seven of the nine were either in the U.S. Army or had sexual partners associated with the military, and four were 20 years old or younger.

The HIV/STD program is also working on a recent outbreak of syphilis cases in the Anchorage area. Since January 2011, 13 new cases of infectious and early syphilis have been reported; nine since October. The current outbreak involves similar risk characteristics as the cluster of new HIV cases in Fairbanks, including men who have had sex with men and who find partners online.

“Several of the patients were co-infected with both syphilis and HIV,” said Susan Jones, the HIV/STD program manager, “and having both diseases increases the potential for passing the infections due to open sores.”

(more)

Everyone with risk factors for HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases should use appropriate precautions when having sex and should be tested. Testing sites for HIV and STDs can be found at: <http://www.hivtest.org/>.

Free rapid HIV testing is available at the Fairbanks Public Health Center, Feb. 21, from 1 to 5 p.m.; Feb. 22, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Feb. 23, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call the health center at 907-452-1776 for more information. [The Interior AIDs Association](#), in Fairbanks, will also be offering free rapid HIV tests, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Feb. 21–24. IAA can be reached at 907-452-4222.

A rapid HIV test consists of simply swabbing the inside of the mouth. Results are available within 20 minutes.

More information on both outbreaks is available at: <http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/bulletins>.

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