



**From:** AIDS Funding Collaborative and The Center for Community Solutions

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## National HIV Testing Day Encourages: “Take the Test, Take Control”

(Cleveland, OH) Thousands of Greater Clevelanders will be reached by a local event next week to raise awareness about the importance of HIV testing and encourage participation in honor of National HIV Testing Day (NHTD) on June 27. In Ohio there are over 17,000 people who have been diagnosed as living with HIV or AIDS; over 3,700 of them call Cuyahoga County home.

On **Tuesday, June 24, from 8am–7pm**, volunteers at the Greater Cleveland RTA Tower City Rapid station and Public Square will distribute information on HIV testing and where to find a **free test** in Cleveland, any time of year.

National HIV Testing Day (NHTD) is an annual campaign to encourage people of all ages to get tested. "Take the Test, Take Control" is the CDC's national public education effort to raise awareness of, increase access to, and reduce the stigma surrounding HIV testing. Across the U.S., about 20 percent of HIV positive individuals do not know they are infected.

Outlined in the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and operationalized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's High Impact HIV Prevention guidelines, there is a renewed focus on HIV testing and linkage of HIV positive individuals to HIV/AIDS care.

“When people know they are HIV positive, they are less likely to take part in behavior that could transmit HIV and are more likely to access treatment to assist in controlling viral loads, which in turn makes transmission much less likely,” said Melissa Federman, AFC director.

“Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, HIV/AIDS is no longer considered a pre-existing condition — more people have health insurance coverage, either through the Marketplace or through the state's Expanded Medicaid program, and have access to HIV/AIDS treatment. The Cleveland area also has extensive resources for HIV/AIDS support services through the Ryan White Program that are accessible for those without insurance,” she added.

Coordinated since 2006 by the AFC, this year's outreach event, will reach between 7,000 and 10,000 people. For information about the AFC, visit [www.AIDSFundingCollaborative.org](http://www.AIDSFundingCollaborative.org).

*The AIDS Funding Collaborative (AFC) strengthens the community's response to HIV/AIDS as a public/private partnership providing coordination, leadership, and funding in Greater Cleveland. The AFC is located within the offices of The Center for Community Solutions, which provides fiscal and administrative oversight.*