Dear Colleagues:

There are more than 160,000 people with undiagnosed HIV in the United States. The COVID-19 epidemic has made it more difficult to access traditional places where testing is provided, such as clinic-based testing sites, community-based organizations, and healthcare settings. Yet, the benefits of knowing one’s HIV status continue, including improved health and prevention. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages people at risk for HIV infection to get tested in ways that are in compliance with stay-at-home orders and social distancing practices, including self-testing. In many places, HIV testing that requires face-to-face contact has been scaled back or suspended because of the COVID-19 pandemic response. CDC understands the challenge this creates for the public and for our partners. Health departments, community-based organizations, and other providers of clinical HIV testing services can expand their support for HIV self-testing services especially where face-to-face testing services have been disrupted.

HIV self-testing programs, using the U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved home test, can supplement the HIV prevention efforts of health departments and community-based organizations. Health departments and community-based organizations are encouraged to provide residents of their service areas with self-test kits and have them shipped to their homes or other locations, and if the test is positive, information regarding linkage to care should be provided. This information is already included in the package insert for the FDA-approved self-test. If CDC funds are used to support self-testing services, CDC requires jurisdictions to report National HIV Prevention Program Monitoring & Evaluation data for the total number of test kits distributed as part of this program and the total number of people who received at least one test. Soon, CDC will publish detailed guidance for reporting jurisdictions specifying when, and how, to report these aggregate measures to CDC.

Your continued commitment to HIV prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic is appreciated. We will continue to work with you to develop and provide additional guidance, resources, and technical assistance to support this important work.

Sincerely,

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