

HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



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**Kent County Health Department and the Grand Rapids Red Project Partner
for Free HIV Testing and Education**

(GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – June 19, 2021) – In honor of National HIV Testing Day on June 27, the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) and the Grand Rapids Red Project are holding a free HIV testing and education event on Thursday, June 24, 2021 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The event will take place in the parking lot across the street from the Kent County Sheldon Complex, 121 Franklin St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507.

Certified test counselors will be onsite to provide testing, answer questions, and connect residents with additional services. There will also be music, food, and free gifts.

HIV self-testing is also an option. If you are interested in testing yourself for HIV at home, visit <https://bit.ly/3bPzLlh> to find out how to order a free HIV testing kit.

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the KCHD recommend everyone know their HIV status,” says KCHD Public Health Program Supervisor April Hight. “This knowledge is essential for getting helpful therapy and for protecting others from the virus.”

More than one million people in the United States are living with HIV and one in eight people are infected with HIV without realizing it, according to the CDC. Nearly 40 people are diagnosed with HIV in Kent County every year. The only way for a person to know their status is to get tested.

HIV, Human Immunodeficiency Virus, attacks the cells that make up the body’s immune system. HIV can make it difficult for an infected individual to fight off diseases and, left untreated, it can develop into Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome - AIDS – which can be fatal.

Individuals who are at risk for HIV infection can take PrEP, a daily pill that is 99% effective at reducing the risk for HIV infection. PrEP is available at the KCHD Personal Health Services Clinic. For more information about PrEP or if you would like to be tested, call 616-632-7171.

More Information on HIV and AIDS can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/>.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

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