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**October 16, 2018**

**NEWS RELEASE**

## **Department Extends Hours for HIV Testing in Celebration of National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day**

**EL PASO, Texas** – The City of El Paso Department of Public Health’s HIV Prevention Program will be extending their hours of operation this Wednesday in celebration of National Latinx AIDS Awareness Day. This year’s theme is “Ending HIV is Everyone’s Job” and program officials say it is especially important that everyone in El Paso know their HIV status.

“Nationally, Latinos make up 16.7% of the U.S. Population but in 2016 they accounted for roughly 25% of new HIV infections,” said Elias Gonzalez, HIV Prevention Education Specialist. “While infection rates among other ethnic/racial groups within the U.S. have stabilized, rates have increased among Latino populations,” he said.

In the state of Texas Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 38% of new HIV infections in 2016, many of which were young Latino men between the ages of 20 and 34. In El Paso, 90% of new HIV infections happened among people who were Latino.

In an effort to draw attention to the many barriers and inequalities Latinos face that can lead to HIV infection including stigma, low access to healthcare, language barriers, and issues with stricter immigration enforcement, HIV testing will be easier this week as a part of this national effort. Free, confidential and rapid HIV, syphilis and Hepatitis C testing will be available on **Wednesday, October 17, 2018** from **8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** and from **1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

**Background:**

*Testing is incredibly important, as across the State of Texas and in El Paso, many individuals do not realize they are living with HIV until they begin to feel sick and HIV has progressed into an advanced stage, causing AIDS. Regular and routine testing is essential so that people who are HIV-negative can stay negative and people who are living with HIV can stay in treatment and live healthy full lives.*

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