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## **NRHA Observes World Aids Day** **Research Shows Rural Outbreaks on the Rise**

(Washington, D.C.) - As we observe World AIDS Day 2006 today, December 1st, an estimated 38.6 million people are living with HIV worldwide. In 2005, 4.1 million people became infected with HIV. World AIDS Day is an opportunity for us to learn more about the impact of HIV/AIDS throughout the world and within our own rural communities.

In the United States, an estimated 1,185,000 Americans are living with HIV, with approximately 40,000 new infections every year. HIV/AIDS continues to infect and affect members of our rural communities. Over the years, 5-8% of HIV cases in the U.S. have been in rural areas. I want to share some alarming facts about HIV in our rural communities<sup>1</sup> :

- 68% of all AIDS cases among rural populations are in Southern states. In some rural areas, HIV/AIDS diagnosis rates are almost as high as those in urban areas.
- African Americans represent 50% of rural AIDS cases, followed by Whites (37%), Latinos (9%), and American Indian/Alaska Natives (2%).
- While 75 % of rural AIDS cases are among men, rates among rural women, particularly among African American women, are increasing. Most women are becoming infected with HIV through heterosexual contact.
- Among rural men, men who have sex with men (MSM) comprise approximately 60% of rural AIDS cases and injecting drug users (IDUs) about 20%. In 2000, in the rural South, 28.5% of men were infected through heterosexual contact.

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from "What are rural HIV prevention needs?" CAPS Fact Sheet, 5/06, prepared by UCSF Center for AIDS Prevention Studies. Available at [www.caps.ucsf.edu/pubs/FS/revrural.php](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/pubs/FS/revrural.php)

To help address the needs of our rural communities, the National Rural Health Association, with support from the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of HIV/AIDS Policy, have developed the following resources:

- Rural HIV/AIDS Care: Resources for Providers presents web-based resources on

delivery of HIV care to help minimize "digging" for online help. Specific resources for rural settings include provider training venues and ways to co-manage a client with an HIV expert. More general HIV care resources, such as treatment guidelines, are also provided.

- Best Practices in Rural HIV/AIDS Care provides insights on delivery of services in rural settings based upon interviews with rural HIV care programs around the nation.

Transportation and Provider Training will be released on World AIDS Day. Future best practices will cover such topics as co-managing clients, techniques for delivering clinical care to rural clients, and addressing HIV/AIDS stigma.

In honor of World AIDS Day, I encourage all of you to learn more about HIV/AIDS and the new rural health provider resources we have developed. Although World AIDS Day is just one day, it serves as a reminder to all of us that we must continue to increase HIV/AIDS prevention, testing, and treatment in our rural communities and beyond.

For additional information please visit or call the following:

- National Rural Health Association: [www.NRHArural.org](http://www.NRHArural.org)
- World AIDS Day Resources: [www.omhrc.gov/hivaidsobservances/world/index.html](http://www.omhrc.gov/hivaidsobservances/world/index.html)
- HIV Testing Locations: [www.hivtest.org](http://www.hivtest.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS

*The NRHA is a national nonprofit organization, with more than 10,000 members that provides leadership on rural health issues. The Association's mission is to improve the health and wellbeing of rural Americans and to provide leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education, and research. The NRHA membership is made up of a diverse collection of individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.*

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