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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 10, 2018

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MDHHS urges screening and early diagnoses as part of Sexually Transmitted Diseases Awareness Month

LANSING, Mich. – Each year, nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted infections occur in the United States, costing the healthcare system nearly \$16 billion in direct medical costs alone, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As part Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) Awareness Month, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is raising awareness about prevention strategies and the benefits of screening and early diagnosis.

In Michigan in 2017, reported cases of STDs increased compared to 2016. Chlamydia reports rose 9 percent, gonorrhea increased 22 percent and primary and secondary syphilis cases were up 28 percent. These increases mirror national trends.

However, there are effective ways to prevent, diagnose and treat STDs. For all individuals who are sexually active, screening and prompt treatment are critical to protect a person's health and prevent transmission to others. MDHHS works with local health departments, healthcare providers, pharmacists and community-based organizations to test, treat and increase awareness about STDs as well as provide non-traditional opportunities to access service.

“Screening and early diagnoses are essential in preventing transmission and the long-term health consequences of STDs,” said Dr. Eden Wells, MDHHS chief medical executive. “We can all make a positive impact in preventing STDs through education and open conversations.”

In Michigan, sexual partners of some patients with gonorrhea or chlamydia can be treated via Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) to avoid reinfection. EPT allows physicians to prescribe antibiotics for partners of infected patients without examining them. Prompt treatment of patients and partners can reduce negative health outcomes, especially among women, such as infertility and perinatal STD transmission.

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Understanding risk, abstaining from sex, reducing the number of partners and consistently and correctly using condoms are all effective prevention strategies. Safe, effective vaccines are also available to prevent hepatitis B and some types of the human papillomavirus that cause genital warts and can cause cancer.

More information and resources about STD Awareness Month are available on the CDC website at Cdc.gov/std/sam/. Data and technical assistance for Michigan's STD program is available at Michigan.gov/hivstd.

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