

Putnam Health Dept. to Offer Free HIV Testing

This year annual National HIV Testing Day encourages people of all ages to “Test your way. Do it today.” As in previous years, the main message is to take control of your health and find out if you may have the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, which over time usually causes AIDS. In early stages a person often feels fine. In fact, approximately one in seven Americans infected do not know they are carrying the virus. In total, nearly 1.1 million people in the U.S. are living with HIV, according to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention in Atlanta.

“With early diagnosis, we can begin treatment sooner,” said Michael Nesheiwat, MD, Putnam County’s Interim Commissioner of Health. “This can make a big difference in the patient’s outcome. It can save lives and can help limit the spread of the virus.”

To encourage HIV testing, the Putnam

County Department of Health, in partnership with Westchester Medical Center and Planned Parenthood, will be offering free rapid HIV testing and counseling on Tuesday, June 27. Mobile vans will be located at the Carmel Fire Department, 94 Gleneida Avenue, from 9 a.m. to noon, and at Brewster Towne Plaza, 1620 Route 22 (near Value Village), from noon to 6 p.m. Testing will also be offered at the main health department office, 1 Geneva Road, Brewster, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Privacy and confidentiality are ensured. No appointments are necessary and results are ready in 20 minutes. Free condoms, giveaways and educational information will be available at all sites.

HIV can affect anyone regardless of age, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or gender. In 2015, 22 percent of all new HIV diagnoses in the U.S. were among youth aged 13 to 24 years of age. People aged 50

and older have many of the same HIV risk factors as younger people, but may be less aware of their risk. In 2014, people aged 50 and older accounted for 17 percent of those living with HIV infection.

Today people with HIV and AIDS are living longer, healthier and more productive lives. New research is promising, but there is still no vaccine or cure for HIV. Safe sex is the best “primary prevention,” but early testing and diagnosis saves lives too. Testing and early results are part of what is called “secondary prevention” in public health terms. Older Americans are more likely than youth to be tested later in the course of their disease. This means delayed treatment, often more health problems and shorter survival. Despite medical advances, HIV/AIDS is still a significant cause of death for some age groups. It was the 8th leading cause of death for those from 25 to 34 years of age in 2014 in the

U.S.

For more information about HIV testing or HIV/AIDS education and prevention, contact the Health Department at (845) 808-1390.

The Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

Local Law Enforcement Steps up Patrols during Graduation Season

This June, many of Putnam County’s teens will be graduating high school and getting ready for college or entry into the work force. Many see this time as a “rite of passage” and engage in underage drinking and drug use (marijuana being the top drug). Also many parents see no problem in hosting graduation parties where alcohol will be served. Graduations are meant to be enjoyable and memorable experiences. “However, when alcohol and/or drugs are in the mix, quite the opposite can happen especially in Putnam where many young people will be getting in their cars to travel to and from parties around the County” says Bruce Kelly, Coalition

Coordinator of Putnam Communities That Care Coalition.

To insure that our young people have a safe and enjoyable graduation, law enforcement in Putnam County will be conducting party patrols throughout the graduation season. They will be on the lookout for intoxicated/impaired drivers as well as for underage drinking parties at area residences. “High School graduation is a time for celebration, a special occasion not to be marred by tragedy. Extra police officers will be assigned to DWI enforcement during graduation weekend to promote traffic safety” says Carmel Police Chief Michael Cazzari.

Every town in Putnam County has passed legislation entitled Social Host Liability Law. These local laws make it a misdemeanor to “host, suffer, permit, organize, or allow a party, gathering or event at his or her place of residence... where three or more minors are present and alcoholic beverages are being consumed by any minor.” In other words, it is illegal for anyone to host a party at their home and allow underage drinking to occur. This misdemeanor crime is punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a \$3000 fine.

Putnam County Sheriff Donald B. Smith noted that the dire ramifications

for hosting a drinking party for minors go beyond legal exposure. “Allowing teens to drink alcohol in one’s home not only brings with it severe criminal penalties and civil liability,” said the Sheriff, “but, even more to the point, how could one live with himself or herself afterward if a teen dies or is maimed as a result?”

The Putnam Communities That Care Coalition along with the Putnam County Sheriff’s Office, NY State Police, Kent Police Department, Carmel Police Department, Cold Spring Police Department & Brewster Police Department wish all of our graduates good luck and remind them to be safe during graduation time.

Prevention Council of Putnam Looks to Curb Underage Gambling

The Prevention Council of Putnam has partnered with the New York Council on Problem Gambling to carry-out the YOU(th) Decide Program in Putnam County. 2017 marks the sixth year that the NY Council on Problem Gambling has worked with local providers in an effort to prevent underage and problem gambling.

YOU(th) Decide Program is designed to be a multi-dimensional prevention effort aimed at reducing underage gambling. Local providers participating in the YOU(th) Decide Project educate youth, work with local community leaders to decrease the availability of gambling at family and youth-focused events, and conduct media and outreach campaigns. The most recent research indicates that among United States youth between the ages of 14 and 21, 68% have gambled in the past year, and 11% have gambled twice a week or more. Of those youth, 6.5% are at-risk for, or have already developed, a gambling problem (Welte, 2007).

The month of June brings ample opportunity for gift giving with graduations, awards ceremonies and religious ceremonies it may be a common practice to give youth Lottery and/or Scratch-Offs as part of a gift; we are encouraging people not to give these to youth as presents. In New York State you must be 18 years or older to purchase Lottery games and 21 years of age to play Quick Draw where alcoholic beverages are served.

Underage gambling brings with it a number of negative consequences, many of which are serious, and can be devastating to the youth as well as his/her family and friends. The younger an adolescent begins gambling, the more likely he/she is to develop a gambling addiction. Underage gamblers are at an increased risk of delinquency and crime, damaged relationships and poor academic performance (Wynne et al., 1996). Youth who gamble are also more likely than their non-gambling peers to develop

mental health issues including depression and alcohol/substance abuse disorders (Hardoon et al, 2002), to attempt suicide (Gupta and Derevensky, 1998), and to maintain poor general health (Potenza et al, 2002).

There is not just one person, nor just one group of people, affected by underage gambling. There is not just one risk factor or protective factor that plays a role in underage gambling. There is not

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