



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 10, 2010

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Howard University's NMAETC encourages health care providers to offer culturally appropriate routine HIV testing to promote early entry into medical care for Women and Girls infected with HIV.

The National Minority AIDS Education and Training Center (**NMAETC**), Howard University College of Medicine, Department of Infectious Diseases, honors the observance of March 10, 2010, as the ***National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day***. We join the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Women's Health and the Office of Minority Health in this nationwide initiative to raise awareness of the increasing impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls.

HIV has quietly become the third most-deadly disease for women in the United States (behind only cancer and heart disease). It is also the leading cause of death for African-American women between the ages of 25 and 34. This year's theme, "**HIV is Right Here at Home**", aligns itself with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's call to increase HIV testing among all populations, especially those at increased risk. Today, approximately 1 in 4 Americans living with HIV are women. In fact, every 35 minutes, a woman tests positive for HIV in the United States.

"The **NMAETC** recognizes that girls and young women are at high risk of HIV infection because many lack information about sexual and reproductive health as well as disease prevention," says Goulda A. Downer, Assistant Professor and Principal Investigator for the NMAETC. "Additionally, young women are among the most vulnerable because their genital tract has less mature tissue, and is thus more easily damaged. Also, often girls and young women are victims of coercive or forced sex. For women and girls, this may be the result of a combination of social, biological, economic and cultural which sadly contribute to their vulnerability to HIV infection".

The **NMAETC's** ten years of unbroken national service has resulted in the education and training of over 37,500 HIV clinicians and other providers on HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and support issues. Further, our efforts has strengthened the capacity of HIV providers to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate care to those most impacted by HIV/AIDS, including women and girls.

The National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day provides yet another opportunity to encourage women and girls to get tested and take an active role in their overall health and wellness. We encourage women and girls to i) feel empowered, ii) take control of their own protection from HIV/AIDS as they get the facts about the disease, iii) learn how to protect

themselves and those they love, and, iv) get treated if newly diagnosed or currently living with HIV.

Today, the NMAETC joins women and girls, nationwide, who are raising their voices to proclaim their importance and value to our national community.

Howard University's National Minority AIDS Education and Training Center has a wide resource of ethnically and racially diverse clinicians and care providers nationwide. Our resources are also used to strengthen the capacity of clinicians and care providers to offer culturally competent clinical care, treatment and support to Women and Girls. These combined efforts have proven to be effective in reducing healthcare disparities in this population. For more information visit our website at www.nmatec.org