



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE- AUGUST 13, 2015

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The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach Announces New Free STI Testing and Treatment Program

Center to offer long awaited STI testing, treatment and counseling at 4th Street location

Long Beach, CA- The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach has announced that starting Tuesday August 18th, the organization will expand services to include comprehensive testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). This pilot project will start by offering the free service two days a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays and will include screenings for syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and hepatitis B and C.

“We have been working for nearly two years on this project to provide free STI testing to our community”, said Ismael Morales, Director of Health & Wellness Services at The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach. “Having provided free, rapid HIV testing since 2010 we have learned that there is a great need in Long Beach for LGBTQ affirming and inclusive sexual health services that include STI testing.”

The STI testing program will enhance the current rapid HIV testing program that has been extremely successful, conducting over 7,000 tests since 2010. The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach will be collaborating with St. Mary’s Medical Center to provide a mobile testing clinic and medical staff during the pilot period that will last through the end of the year. During the pilot period, Center staff will collect data and feedback from the community to develop a program that meets the needs of the LGBTQ community in Long Beach. Additionally, The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach will be remodeling their current health services space to accommodate additional STI testing services including an exam room, additional lab space and office space for new and current health services staff.

According to the 2013 Community Health Assessment gathered by the City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services, Long Beach incidence rates of STI infections are high and continue to outpace both Los Angeles County and California. In 2011, there were 438 cases of gonorrhea reported in Long Beach and incidence rates have been higher than both California and Los Angeles County until 2009. Since 2009 incidence rates of gonorrhea remain below Los Angeles County, but are still well above the State rates. In 2010, there were over 2,400 cases of chlamydia reported in Long Beach. Teens and young adults ages 15-29 have a significantly higher incidence rate of chlamydia, with rates over twice to more than five times that of other age groups. Lastly, primary and secondary syphilis was on the rise since 2001, but has seen a sharp decline since 2008, however, incidence rates in Long Beach are still above California and Los Angeles County. According to the CDC in 2013, 75% of the reported syphilis cases in the United States were among men who have sex with men (MSM).

This program is made possible by funding provided in part by the Los Angeles County Health Department, Division of HIV and STD Programs, proceeds collected at the 2014 Long Beach AIDS Ride and from generous contributions from donors and sustainable members of The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach.

Testing will take place at The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach (2017 E. 4th Street Long Beach, CA 90814) and the community is asked to call (562) 434-4455 to make an appointment, check for walk-in times or for any questions regarding testing and treatment services. Questions about the program or health & wellness services can be directed to Ismael Morales, Director of Health & Wellness Services at lmorales@centerlb.org. For more information visit www.centerlb.org.