

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**Contact:** Karrey Britt  
Communications Coordinator  
Office: (785) 856-7362

## **Health Department offering free HIV testing in community as part of World AIDS Day activities**

**(Lawrence, KS)** – In conjunction with World AIDS Day, the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department encourages residents to get educated about the disease and to get tested.

AIDS is a disease that weakens the immune system, gradually destroying the body's ability to fight infections and certain cancers. The human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, causes it. HIV is spread most often through sexual contact, contaminated needles or syringes shared by drug abusers, infected blood or blood products, and from infected women to their babies at birth or through breast-feeding.

In the U.S., nearly 1 million people are living with HIV and one in six of those are unaware of their HIV status. In Douglas County, nearly 68 percent of adults report they've never had an HIV test.

“Knowing your HIV status is critical. It's important to get tested early to help prevent spread of the disease as well as to help prevent the virus from becoming full-blown AIDS,” said Kim Ens, director of Clinic Services. If you have HIV, getting medical care and taking prescribed medication regularly helps you live a longer, healthier life and also lowers the chances of passing HIV on to others. In 2012, there were about 3,800 people in Kansas living with HIV/AIDS.

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department offers HIV counseling and testing in its clinic at 200 Maine St. To make an appointment, call 843-0721. On Dec. 1, the Health Department also will be offering education and free HIV testing in the community. Testing will be:

- 11 a.m.-2 p.m. — Kansas Union, 1301 Jayhawk Blvd.
- 3-5 p.m. — Lawrence Public Library, 707 Vermont St.

Additionally, the Health Department and the University of Kansas, will offer a free showing of “Dallas Buyers Club,” a movie about an AIDS patient diagnosed in the 1980s, at 8 p.m. in KU's Ellsworth Residence Hall, 1734 Engel Road. At 7:30 p.m. before the showing, a Kansas resident will share his story of living with HIV. This event is open to the public.