



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

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NEWS RELEASE

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WELD COUNTY TO OBTAIN RAPID SCREENING KITS TO COMBAT RISING RATES OF STIs



WELD COUNTY, CO — The Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment (WCDPHE) will obtain no-cost, rapid screening/testing kits for HIV, Hepatitis C, and syphilis following the approval of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and the Weld County Board of Commissioners.

Colorado has seen substantial increases in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in recent years and CDPHE has placed Weld County under an Alert Status for newly diagnosed HIV and syphilis cases. The 2022 case rate of new HIV diagnoses in Weld County was 6.7 cases/100,000 residents compared to a case rate of 4.1/100,000 in 2021. From 2017 to 2021, the rate of syphilis in the state has increased 172.2%. In the same time, the rate of reported cases of syphilis among women 15-44 years old increased 494.2%.

The rise in the number of reported cases of STIs is due, in part, to people returning to health providers for regular check-ups after COVID. During the pandemic, there was a decrease in the number of people going to their provider and some clinics had decreased capacity for STI screening which had a profound impact on trends tracked by surveillance data. Increased access to testing, and appropriate and prompt testing of persons with potential exposure to STIs, is critically important in interrupting disease transmissions.

“The number one strategy when in an alert status is increased screening,” said WCDPHE Public Health Services Director, Shaun May. “With these finger prick tests we can do community level screening on a lot more people in a way that is a less invasive than drawing blood.”

This support is made available via one-time funding through CDPHE’s Rapid Testing Distribution Program for Local Public Health Agencies. By approving the MOU for the Rapid Testing Distribution Program, Weld County has taken a proactive step to ensure that the county has the correct tools to swiftly identify potential outbreaks on a local level, providing valuable data to the health department and individuals to make informed health decisions. The project term for this MOU runs until the end of 2023.

For more information about the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment and its programs, please visit <https://www.weld.gov/Government/Departments/Health-and-Environment>.

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