

**ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive**  
**JOSHUA LIPSMAN, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health**  
**SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications**

**CONTACT: SUSAN TOLCHIN**  
**MARY LANDRIGAN**

**(914) 995-2932**  
**(914) 813-5013**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 6, 2002**

**WESTCHESTER COUNTY TO OBSERVE**  
**NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY, FEBRUARY 7**

In recognition of the vast disparities between African Americans and other communities with respect to HIV infection and AIDS deaths, Westchester County will join with the rest of the nation in observing tomorrow, February 7, as National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, announced Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Westchester County Health Commissioner.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV/AIDS is striking African-American communities at such frightening proportions that it may very well become the leading cause of death among persons of color within a generation.

“Despite many notable successes in the field of HIV/AIDS research, such as new treatments that have slowed the progression of HIV infections to AIDS defining illnesses, the disease still remains an epidemic at large, especially among the African-American population,” said Dr. Lipsman. “AIDS is currently the leading cause of death nationwide among African-American men and women ages 25 to 44. This disparity also exists in Westchester County, where African Americans make up only 14.2% of the County’s total population, but account for 51% of Westchester residents living with AIDS,” he added.

“National statistics show that African-American men are over seven times more likely than Caucasian men to contract AIDS,” continued Dr. Lipsman. “For African-American women, the situation is even worse, as they are over 24 times more likely to develop AIDS than Caucasian women. This disproportion also holds true for African-American children. In the United States, approximately 9,000 children under 13 years of age have

**MORE**

AIDS and 59% them are African-American. Statistically, this indicates that African-American children are 23 times more likely than Caucasian children to develop AIDS,” he said.

The Westchester County Department of Health has been working aggressively to combat the disease locally. The following initiatives are underway:

- Through a newly restructured AIDS Advisory Council, ideas are being solicited from leaders of Westchester’s diverse communities about ways to enhance the Health Department’s efforts to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Throughout Westchester County, an advertising campaign has been mounted on billboards, in buses and bus shelters, and on brochures and postcards, to alert people to the importance of getting tested for HIV to prevent its further spread.
- The Health Department provides free HIV/AIDS testing for residents at four locations throughout the County. Residents seeking more information or wishing to schedule an appointment should call (914) 813-5185.
- The Health Department’s website, [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health), offers a wealth of information on HIV/AIDS, as well as a minority health section which focuses on health issues of importance to minority groups.
- The Health Department’s Partner Notification Assistance Program assists HIV positive individuals in notifying their past and present sexual partners of potential HIV/AIDS exposure. Staff are available to help the infected individual develop a plan for self or assisted notification or will do the notification on behalf of the individual in a confidential manner.

For additional information about HIV/AIDS programs, prevention and testing services, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000, or visit the Health Department’s website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).