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# Family Life Center

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## NORTHWEST news

The program will run from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. Oct. 11 at 2100 S.E. Belmont St. After the two-hour class ends, organizers will ask participants to evaluate the curriculum.

The free class is limited to the first 25 registrants. Snacks will be provided.

To register call Tina Barfoot at 503-872-9664.

### HIV EXPANDED REPORTING IN EFFECT

Implementation of Oregon's HIV name-to-code reporting system began Oct. 1.

"This new system will help public health professionals assure that HIV-infected individuals are linked to life-saving medical and social services," said Grant Higginson, state public health officer at the Department of Human Services. "Because there have been real improvements in treatment, HIV infection no longer needs to be a hopeless terminal condition. With medication and care, it can be managed as a chronic illness. Tracking HIV infection as well as AIDS cases also means that public health will have a much more accurate understanding of the disease. This will improve our ability to plan services and prevention activities."

The new reporting system, originally

confidentiality assurances, communicating clearly about the name-to-code reporting policy and building incentives for HIV testing among high-risk populations.

The Department of Human Services already has taken steps to help in many of these areas and developed plans to address the others, according to Higginson. Oregon joins only two other states that have a name-to-code system; 34 states have a straight name-based HIV reporting system, and 11 use unique identifiers for reporting.

"We take confidentiality very seriously," Higginson said. "The HIV program uses a stand-alone computer that is located in a locked room. The Department of Justice is reviewing our public health privacy laws to make sure they are as strong as they can be. We are developing policies establishing severe penalties for breaching confidentiality. Finally, we're looking at how we can best assure these laws are consistently followed at both state and local levels. We're developing a social marketing campaign that includes culturally appropriate messages to educate and promote HIV testing in communities at high risk of infection. We're also looking at how to best target information and provide incentives so people at higher risk of HIV infection will seek testing."



More than 3,500 youth and adults gather Sept. 22 in Pioneer Courthouse Square for AIDS Walk 2001

planned to take effect in July, was postponed last spring to allow workgroups to finish preparing for implementation. The delay also allowed for a series of outreach meetings across Oregon with community members who had not participated in previous discussions about name-to-code reporting.

"We've listened to concerns from our advisory committee and participants in the community outreach meetings," Higginson said. "As a result, we've designed a reporting system that should serve Oregonians well. Some individuals believe that the HIV name-to-code reporting system will create a barrier. For this reason, anonymous testing will continue to be an option in every county. Also, if someone chooses to use a pseudonym when testing, their actual name will be reported only if they test positive. For those few individuals with intense confidentiality concerns, we'll collect only those letters of the name needed to create the unique identifier."

More than 200 people participated in the outreach meetings, which were conducted by an outside facilitator. Other recommendations for improving the system include: strengthening

### AIDS WALK 2001 SETS RECORD

The 15th annual AIDS Walk on Sept. 22 was the biggest yet, with more than 190 teams—100 more than last year. The event benefits Cascade AIDS Project, the leading provider of HIV prevention education, services, housing and advocacy in Oregon and southwest Washington.

"We are very excited about the number of teams," executive director Thomas Bruner said. "The community response has been amazing."

Multnomah County Commissioner Serena Cruz, AIDS Walk 2001 honorary chairwoman, led participants from Pioneer Courthouse Square to start the five- and 10-kilometer walks, which wound their way through downtown and Northwest Portland. "AIDS is a community crisis that will not go away unless we work together to solve it," she said.

More than 3,500 youth and adults participated. CAP raised \$200,000—far surpassing its goal of \$175,000—making it one of the most successful AIDS Walks ever.

PHOTO BY MARY DAVIS