

# HIV Reporting Called Important Health Step

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Oregon has taken an important step toward better controlling the impact of HIV infection in the state and extending the lives of those who have the disease.

On Oct. 1, the Oregon Department of Human Services put a new HIV reporting system into effect. It requires the names of persons who test positive for HIV to be reported confidentially to the public health system. This will improve our ability to track the progression of HIV among Oregonians and better target prevention efforts and services.

This HIV reporting system means that public health can assure that HIV-positive individuals are connected with life-saving treatment and other support services. There was a time when becoming infected with HIV meant terminal illness. That is no longer true. Today, with proper medication and care, HIV can be managed as a chronic disease. But in order for that to happen, people must know if they are infected and they must be treated.

Some Oregonians have voiced concerns about reporting names of HIV positive individuals. Because there is a stigma associated with HIV infection, they fear that people will not go in for the test. There



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are also anxieties about breaches in confidentiality. There is apprehension that names of persons who are HIV positive could be leaked to members of the community, employers, landlords, or even other government agencies.

Public health takes these concerns seriously and has built a flexible system that responds to these issues:

- Anonymous HIV testing is still an option, available at county health departments and other publicly funded sites.
- If clients choose to use a

pseudonym when being tested, the patient's actual name will be reported to the system only if they test positive.

- Confidential testing is available from both private health-care providers and county HIV testing sites.
- Labs will report positive tests via a secure, confidential mechanism.
- In the case of positive test results, the health care provider will be asked to assure that the patient is informed of medical care and support services and that his or her care

conforms to national HIV treatment guidelines.

- Once a case report is completed and medical and support assurances are received, the patient's name will be converted to a code. At this point, the individual's name is permanently erased. In no instance will a name be held for more than 90 days.

- To prevent HIV/AIDS reporting information from being "hacked" or stolen, the HIV program uses a physically secure computer that is not connected to the Internet or any other network.

- We are committed to ensuring confidentiality and are taking steps to strengthen privacy safeguards at state and county levels.

We join 47 states, each of which has adopted some type of confidential HIV reporting system. We have worked long and hard with many partners to craft a reporting system that will work in Oregon.

Over the next months, we will be conducting activities to outreach, educate and inform communities about HIV expanded reporting. Our goal is to save lives and to better track the disease so we can focus prevention efforts in areas where they are most needed.

Grant Higginson, M.D. is state public health officer at the Oregon Department of Human Services.

# Town Hall on Security, Freedom and Terrorism

A panel of Oregon public affairs observers will consider questions related to living in an America now keenly aware of its vulnerability.

The issues will be addressed when Pacific University launches the third year of the Pacific Questions Town Hall series with "Security, Freedom and Terrorism: National Security and Personal Liberty," on Wednesday, Oct. 17 at 7 p.m. in Taylor Auditorium in Marsh Hall on Pacific's campus in Forest Grove. The event is open to the public at no charge, but seating is limited.

"All seem to agree that life will never be the same for any of us after the events of Sept. 11," said Marc Marengo, director of the Pacific Institute for Ethics and Social Policy. "We want to be safe, but we also want to be free."

What price are we willing to pay for increased security? How should we balance the need for national security with America's deep commitment to personal freedom?"

Town Hall panelists will include Oregon State Senator Peter Courtney; civil liberties attorney Charles Hinkle; and Seth Singleton, professor of international relations at Pacific University. Bill Gallagher, KPAM News Talk 860 talk show host, will moderate the 90-minute town hall.

"We are bringing together an outstanding and diverse group of Oregonians to help us look at the events of the recent past and to pose questions about creating a vision for the future given this new reality," said Pacific President Faith Gabelnick. "How do we create a more civil society?"

## Market Vouchers Go Unclaimed

Low-income senior citizens in Oregon may be holding unused vouchers that will be good only through Oct. 28 at farmers markets and roadside stands across the state.

"We made these vouchers available to seniors who qualified based on income, and we are encouraging them to check for any they haven't used before they expire," said Lydia Lissman, Oregon Dept. of Human Services assistant director for seniors and people with disabilities.

She estimates that nearly \$1 million worth of the vouchers have gone unused.

The one-time federal program to help seniors buy farmers' fresh produce provided \$100 vouchers to 12,000 Oregon senior citizens, who had to be at least age 65, earn no more than \$11,592 annually, and receive Medicaid or Older Americans Act services to qualify. A list of eligible farmers markets and roadside stands was mailed to eligible seniors with the vouchers.

## Passenger Car Title Fee Changes

The cost for an original, transfer or replacement title for most passenger cars in Oregon increased this month from \$10 to \$30.

The added cost is due to the Oregon Transportation Investment Act, passed by the Oregon Legislature to raise funds for much-needed road, bridge and safety improvement projects in the state.

"When you buy a vehicle, make certain you get a title from the person selling the vehicle," said Lorna Youngs,

Oregon Department of Transportation deputy director for DMV. "If you don't have a title when you transfer ownership, you could wind up paying more—once for a duplicate title and then for the title transfer."

Title transfers must be done within 30 days in order to avoid late penalties.

"We want people to know that this new law doesn't change registration fees. Registration for passenger cars is still \$30," Youngs said.

## Westside MAX Beats Ridership Projections

Westside MAX ridership topped 25 million rides during the first three years it has run between downtown Portland, Beaverton and Hillsboro. According to Tri-Met, Westside MAX has already surpassed 2005 ridership projections of 25,200 daily rides. The ridership now averages 27,600 daily.

Officials say half of the riders in the corridor are new to transit and overall transit ridership west of Portland grew 157 percent.

"Westside MAX reached record ridership because it is a good alternative to driving," said Tri-Met General Manager Fred Hansen. "Our riders find it works not only for commuting to work, but also for shopping, ball games and other special events."

Tri-Met says Westside

MAX continues to be a catalyst for transit-oriented development.

Since the 18-mile extension was announced, nearly \$825 million in residential and commercial development is underway within walking distance of the 20 MAX stations, officials said.

With the September opening of the Airport MAX line, there is now 38 miles of light rail track in the Portland area. Another 5.8 miles are under construction - the Interstate MAX line opens in September 2004. It will connect North Portland to downtown via Interstate Avenue.

For information about how to get around on MAX and Tri-Met's 98 bus lines, see [www.tri-met.org](http://www.tri-met.org) or call 503-238-RIDE weekdays between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

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