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September 5, 2006

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**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RELEASES HIV/AIDS REPORT ON RACIAL  
DISPARITIES**

**TALLAHASSEE** – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) today released a report entitled, “Silence is Death: The Crisis of HIV/AIDS in Florida’s Black Communities.” The report focuses on white, black and Hispanic persons living with HIV/AIDS (reported cases). The report quantifies racial/ethnic disparities and ranks the top 20 counties in the state accordingly. A set of recommendations to combat HIV/AIDS is a key part of the report.

“It is unacceptable that for 15 years in a row, HIV/AIDS has been the leading cause of death among black Floridians aged 25-44 years,” said DOH Secretary M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D. “It is time for us to mobilize communities and all those who have a stake in the epidemic to find innovative ways to reduce the associated morbidity and mortality.”

The report calls for communities to:

- Break the silence by raising awareness about HIV/AIDS among blacks.
- Encourage local governments and communities to expand and strengthen their responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic among blacks.
- Encourage individuals to be tested for HIV/AIDS.
- Increase access to HIV prevention and care services.
- Reduce barriers to HIV testing, prevention and care by reducing HIV/AIDS stigma.
- Stimulate the development of a plan to address the disproportionate impact that HIV/AIDS is having on black communities.

“HIV/AIDS prevention and care continue to be among our most critical public health priorities,” said Chief of the DOH Bureau of HIV/AIDS, Thomas Liberti. “More needs to be done to expand voluntary HIV testing, improve HIV prevention, and improve treatment outcomes for blacks.”

Local county health departments are planning community meetings to begin outlining next steps to address the findings in the report. For more information about HIV/AIDS in your community, please contact your local county health department. To view the report in its entirety, please visit [http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease\\_ctrl/aids/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/aids/index.html).

