*AIDS ACTION*
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**Statement on HIV Antibody Testing**
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Important progress has been made in the treatment of HIV and related illnesses. There are now some treatment options that people infected with HIV may consider, which can slow the development of AIDS. As a result, AIDS ACTION recognizes the increased value of an individual knowing his/her antibody status.

Above all, AIDS ACTION BELIEVES THAT THE DECISION TO BE TESTED AND LEARN ONE'S HIV ANTIBODY STATUS IS A PERSONAL DECISION THAT SHOULD BE MADE BY THE INDIVIDUAL BASED ON THE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS/HER OWN LIFE.

Therefore, there are important implications for individuals and institutions.

For individuals:

Individuals whose behaviors within the past ten years have put them at high risk for being infected with HIV should seriously consider anonymous testing. This should be done in consultation with a medical or social service provider experienced with the medical, psychological, financial, and social implications of HIV antibody testing.

Serious consideration means that BEFORE being HIV antibody tested an individual should seriously consider the following:

1. What is your understanding of the medical and psychological benefits and risks for you of your knowing your antibody status at this particular time?

2. What reliable, knowledgeable medical and mental health support will be available to you? Where will you go for care? How will you pay for your treatment? What will your insurance cover if you have insurance? What are the implications of billing HIV-related services to your insurance?

3. How will your present and future employment, housing, health insurance, and support be affected by others knowing your antibody status? (While it is illegal in Massachusetts to discriminate on the basis of being tested or being HIV positive, many individuals experience isolation and discrimination).

4. What supports do you have in your life to help you deal with the stresses that testing positive or negative may cause for you and your friends and family? How will this knowledge affect your ability to achieve and/or maintain safer sexual and/or needle-sharing or drug-free behaviors? What impact might your or your friends' knowing your antibody status have on your alcohol and drug recovery program?