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National Disease Intervention Specialist Recognition Day

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)

October 7, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

Today, on the fifth National Disease Intervention Specialist Recognition Day, we wish to express our sincere gratitude and admiration for the outstanding contributions of Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS). You protect the health of the nation, stop the spread of infections, increase access to medical care, educate the public about disease transmission, and link medical providers with health departments to prevent and control disease.

DIS are public health professionals with ground-level investigative skills that are key components of STD partner services, TB outbreak response, HIV exposure notification, data to care activities, other infectious disease control efforts, and emergency response. You have expertise in essential skills such as communication, counseling, contact tracing, linkage to care, and provider and community engagement.

In order to enhance the public health services provided to communities, and support training and capacity building of DIS, the ongoing DIS Certification Project continues to progress. The project is being coordinated by the Public Health Accreditation Board, in partnership with CDC, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the National Coalition of STD Directors, and with support from national consultants in certification. This is a comprehensive, inclusive effort to develop recommendations to strengthen and formalize the role of DIS in areas such as STD, HIV, TB, and other communicable diseases, as well as emergency preparedness and response.

In 2016, we achieved several milestones, including a job task analysis that describes the fundamental DIS job activities and skills, an enumeration of the DIS workforce, and the establishment of a national registry for DIS. This information provides the foundation for the development of three potential models for DIS certification; all of which will inform a comprehensive framework for future DIS training. CDC and NACCHO have already begun to map the job task analysis findings to our DIS current training, to ensure alignment to the activities DIS do every day. CDC and partners involved with the project are committed and excited about offering a high quality, standardized approach to the professional development of DIS in the coming years.

We are also pleased to announce our progress toward increasing the availability of the Passport to Partner Services course. We have developed a training plan to ensure PHAP Associates have access to Passport training, and we've increased our capacity to deliver the course by adding two new Passport instructors. So far in 2016, there were 359 new DIS from 40 different jurisdictions who completed the Passport to Partner Services course.

We know the challenges you face as well as the fine work you do, often behind the scenes, that saves lives every day. The National Disease Intervention Specialist Recognition Day is one way we can say thank you for the work you do, but know that we respect and support your invaluable contributions and dedication every single day. For your commitment to public health, we say to each of you 'Thank you!'

Sincerely,

Jonathan H. Mermin, M.D., MPH
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