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Governor

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SCOTT COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY DECLARATION EXTENDED

INDIANAPOLIS—State Health Commissioner Jerome Adams, M.D., M.P.H., announced today that he has extended the public health emergency declaration for Scott County until May 24, 2017. The decision allows the county to continue to operate a syringe exchange program as part of a comprehensive effort to stop the spread of HIV and hepatitis C until that date.

A total of 191 people have tested positive for HIV in Scott County since an outbreak tied to sharing of needles among injection drug users was identified in early 2015. Indiana law allows counties experiencing epidemics of HIV or hepatitis C as a result of injection drug use to request a public health emergency declaration allowing for syringe exchange under certain conditions. The syringe exchange program guidance can be found at <http://bit.ly/1YWswpl>.

“Scott County has made great strides in stopping the spread of disease in the past year, but the risk factors that led to the HIV outbreak still exist,” Dr. Adams said. “Extending this declaration allows county health officials to continue their efforts to reduce the risks to their community and ensure that this outbreak remains controlled.”

Dr. R. Kevin Rogers, Scott County’s health officer, expressed his appreciation for the extension.

“Over the past year, the syringe exchange program in Scott County has had a tremendously positive and dramatic impact,” Dr. Rogers said. “It has significantly reduced potential harm to our community, dramatically decreased new cases of HIV and hepatitis C and given our health care providers better and regular access to our citizens, who desperately need medical services. Therefore, I am extremely gratified and encouraged that on recommendation by our county commissioners and with the approval of the state health commissioner, the syringe exchange program has been extended another year.”

The Scott County Health Department submitted its request for a renewal on April 26, 2015, and received approval on April 29. The declaration had previously been scheduled to expire on May 24, 2016.

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