



October 5, 2018

Dear Colleagues,

For the past six years, we have proudly called the first Friday of October [National Disease Intervention Specialists \(DIS\) Recognition Day](#). On October 5, 2018, the seventh annual recognition day devoted to our DIS workforce, we wish to express our sincere gratitude and admiration for your outstanding work in confronting HIV and the rising tide of STDs. Thank you for your dedication, passion, and drive to protect the health of our nation. Whether navigating multiple addresses for a patient who needs STD treatment or being the listening ear and support for an expectant mother diagnosed with syphilis, you are the unsung heroes of our public health workforce.

Being on the front lines of STD prevention is challenging. We know you must negotiate limited resources and complex patient needs in an ever-changing field of STD prevention and control. With the explosion of social media, dating apps, and geolocation, we have changed not only how we meet people, but how we communicate. As a DIS, you are the first to encounter these changes and take action. Your innovative approaches – from using video interviews to helping create social media campaigns – are laying the groundwork for the next era of prevention. You are the indispensable link in the prevention chain—the voice on the ground who understands what it takes to reach our communities and our providers.

With expertise in case analysis, education and counseling, contact tracing, linkage to care, and provider and community engagement, your DIS skills are a vital asset for disease investigation and emergency response to stop the spread of infections in communities whether it be TB, HIV, or others. Again this year, DIS supported outbreak response efforts from coast to coast including a syphilis outbreak that started in an Oklahoma juvenile detention center; a hepatitis outbreak in California; and an opioid-related outbreak of HIV infection in West Virginia. Your work on these outbreaks is a testament to the adaptability, innovation, and commitment of a DIS.

Though this recognition day comes only once a year, we respect and support your tireless, flexible efforts, can-do attitude, and unwavering dedication every single day to improve the nation's health. We could not accomplish our prevention efforts without you. For your commitment to public health, we say to each of you 'Thank you!'

Best Regards,

Gail Bolan, MD  
Director, Division of STD Prevention  
National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis,  
STD and TB Prevention  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/std](http://www.cdc.gov/std)

Jonathan H. Mermin, MD, MPH  
RADM and Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS  
Director  
National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis,  
STD, and TB Prevention  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/nchstp](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp)