



Jeb Bush
Governor

M. Rony François, M.D., M.S.P.H., Ph.D.
Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Contact:
Jeannine Mallory, Public Information Officer
PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
727-824-6908 (media only)

Innovative Health Project Assists Jailed Population

Throughout the U.S., inmates have higher rates of infectious diseases and are at a higher risk for many health problems as compared to the general population. This disparity is due to risk factors among inmates that include drug use, unprotected sex and sexual assault.

The award-winning **Pinellas/Pasco County Jail Linkage Project** is a collaboration between the Pinellas County Health Department and the Pinellas/Pasco County Sheriff's Offices. The program began as a pilot project in 2001 to reduce the spread of infectious diseases among inmates, in jail and upon their release, by providing health care and prevention education to this population. The Pinellas/Pasco Jail Linkage project is one of the first in Florida and has served as a model program for other areas in the state and throughout the U.S.

The Pinellas County Health Department provides services to the entire community, with a special eye towards those with limited access to care. Long recognized as underserved, individuals under incarceration may become involved in high-risk behaviors and might otherwise get lost in or overlooked in the jail health care system. The Jail Linkage Project conducts risk assessments of inmates to determine those at high risk of infection and in need of HIV/STD/TB/Hepatitis testing, treatment, and follow-up services.

Prevention and control of communicable diseases is an overarching goal of public health. The Jail Linkage Project is one way to reach a high-risk population and provide important testing, intervention, education and referrals. The primary goal of the program is to reduce the number of inmates who are at risk for developing communicable diseases.

Jail Linkage program staff conduct risk assessment screenings and pre- and post-test counseling. Inmates are offered rapid HIV testing, screening for Hepatitis A, B, and C, and Hepatitis A and B vaccinations. The inmates screened and tested through this program are informed of their HIV/STD/TB/Hepatitis status, and then linked to appropriate treatment and support services upon release.

(MORE)



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From August 2002 through December 2005, the Jail Linkage Program provided one-on-one prevention education and screening to 3,586 inmates and referred more than 1,700 inmates to community agencies. In addition, during this period, 1,607 inmates received hepatitis vaccines (704 hepatitis A vaccines and 903 hepatitis B vaccines).

In 2002 the Jail Linkage Project received the prestigious Davis Productivity Award. The project was also a featured display at the Quality Management Showcase in 2003, and it was recently showcased at the National Sheriff's Association meeting in Tulsa, OK.

For more information about the Jail Linkage Project visit:

http://www.pinellashealth.com/HIVAIDS_Jailinkage.asp.

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The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity. www.PinellasHealth.com