



**Sheila Dixon**

*Mayor,*  
Baltimore

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## **Mayor Sheila Dixon Launches HIV Prevention Campaign for Youth**

Baltimore, MD (June 6, 2007) Mayor Sheila Dixon joined city and state health department officials and community leaders to announce a new citywide campaign to prevent HIV infection among youth.

Based around the slogan, “Spread the word, not the disease - AIDS is no joke,” the campaign will include television and radio public service announcements, bus shelter advertisements, t-shirts, a website, wristbands and print ads.

The campaign’s goals are to increase awareness of the serious HIV problem in Baltimore, to encourage abstinence, to support condom use among teenagers who are having sex, and to increase counseling and testing for HIV.

Local youth designed and approved the campaign. Parents and youth workers helped to refine the message and develop strategies to educate adults in contact with teenagers. The After School Institute and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Group are overseeing the campaign.

“I agree with the teenagers who created this campaign,” said Mayor Dixon. “AIDS is no joke, and knowledge about how to protect yourself is power.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Baltimore-Towson area had the second highest AIDS rate in 2005 of any metropolitan statistical area in the country.

“Approximately 1 in 5 people with newly diagnosed HIV in Baltimore are between the ages of 20 and 29,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “That’s why the prevention message is so critical for teenagers.”

The campaign was supported with a \$75,000 grant from Baltimore City. Additional resources for dissemination will come from the Maryland AIDS Administration, Channel 25, and the radio station 92Q.

“Our goal is to spread the word as far as we can,” said Rebkha Atnafou, Director of The After-School Institute. “We will be building this message into a variety of educational and social marketing efforts.”

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