

MEDIA ADVISORY
PRESS CONFERENCE: PHOTO/VIDEO OPPORTUNITY

**Experts to Discuss HIV/HCV Screening Program at Homestead Hospital
on National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day**

WHAT: April 10th marks National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day, an annual observance to educate the public about the impact of HIV and AIDS on young people. The HIV epidemic in the United States continues to be a major public health crisis. An estimated 1.2 million Americans are living with HIV and one out of five people do not know they have it, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Florida Department of Health reports Miami-Dade County has the highest rate of new HIV cases in the country.

To interrupt this epidemic, Homestead Hospital embraced the revised HIV testing statutes and implemented a routine HIV and hepatitis C screening and Linkage to Care program – becoming the first hospital in the state to routinely screen for HIV and HCV. It took a coalition of hospital and public health professionals and a significant investment of human and infrastructure resources to bring about systemic change. Patients treated in the emergency department who require bloodwork now receive an HIV and HCV test unless they decline.

Since implementation of this program in May 2016, the emergency department has screened more than 5,000 patients and identified 72 HIV and more than 200 HCV positive individuals. Technological advancements have also helped to identify several highly infectious, acute cases, and working in partnership with the Department of Health, the hospital has been able to immediately link these individuals to care and conduct a social and sexual history to mitigate the spread of infection. There are several positive stories that can be attributed to this program, including young women in early-stage pregnancy who are now taking precautions to prevent HIV transmission to their fetuses.

WHO: The experts include:

- Dr. Lillian Rivera, Administrator of the Florida Department of Health, Miami-Dade County
- Dr. Jorge Mejia, Chief, Infectious Disease, Homestead Hospital
- Denishia Dozier, RN, Emergency Department, Homestead Hospital
- Giselle Gallo, Linkage to Care Specialist, Catalyst Miami
- Heather Melbourne, Director, Laboratory Services, Homestead Hospital

WHEN: Monday, April 10, 2017 at 10:00 AM

*Live shots and B-roll opportunities in the Lab available upon request

**WHERE: Homestead Hospital, Auditorium, First Floor, 975 Baptist Way Homestead,
FL,33033**

To coordinate coverage plans, please contact Georgi Pipkin via email at GeorgiP@baptisthealth.net or by phone at (305)793-9626.