February 18, 2014

TO: Chief School Administrators

FROM: Susan Martz, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student and Field Services

SUBJECT: New Jersey Partnership for School-Based HIV, STD and Pregnancy Prevention

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is pleased to be among 19 states funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for a five-year project of school-based HIV, STD and pregnancy prevention, focused on grades 7 through 12. We have secured this funding because teen pregnancy, infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and the risky sexual behaviors at their root continue to impact the health and learning progress of New Jersey students. This is an unprecedented opportunity for school districts to receive multi-year supports to fine tune health instruction, systems of referral to health services and student positive engagement with learning and, in the process, to impact the course of student lives.

The CDC has funded the NJDOE to partner with 15 school districts to build their capacity to implement strategies that are highly related to student health outcomes and to academic achievement: exemplary sexual health education; student access to key sexual health services; safe and supportive school environments; and district policy for sustained implementation. The NJDOE initially offered this partnership opportunity to districts located in communities with the highest rates of either HIV, sexually transmitted diseases or teen pregnancy and is now expanding its scope of outreach.

Districts eligible to apply will have a minimum enrollment of 3,000 students in grades K through 12 and operate at least one comprehensive high school. As a result of joining this five-year partnership, the district will receive:

- free professional development and technical assistance from state and national experts;
- facilitated professional networking with peer school districts and local service providers;
- resources, data and metrics for how well the district is progressing relative to project goals; and
- recognition at the state and national levels.

As a partner, the district will be expected to implement specific practices:

- Establish a written program of instruction in sexual health education for grades 7-12 that aligns with New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and criteria for exemplary sexual health education;
- provide teacher training in the curriculum and implement teacher evaluation and student assessment;
- Establish a system of referral that supports student access to key sexual health services whether at school or in the community;
• Provide turn-key district professional development for school staff to establish supportive school environments that promote student attendance and graduation and address gender bias, sexual harassment, and inclusion of students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ).

The CDC has partnered with national organizations to provide resources and support for this project. The NJDOE has partnered with the New Jersey Department of Health, the New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Answer of Rutgers University and the Rutgers Bloustein Center for Survey Research to further partnership goals. Visit http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/cdc/ for the project flier, a 30 minute informational webinar and the application form titled School District Statement of Intent to Participate.

The NJDOE urges eligible districts to download, sign and submit the school District Statement of Intent to Participate according to the instructions provided by March 5, 2014. This will enable the NJDOE to notify the CDC of your participation and to prepare the memorandum of understanding between the NJDOE and your district.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Sarah Kleinman, HIV, STD and Pregnancy Prevention Specialist, at 609-292-9615 or send an email to CDCpartner@doe.state.nj.us. We look forward to working with you and your local community providers over the coming five years to impact student attendance, graduation and engagement by addressing healthy sexual development.