

## **"Veterans to Routinely Be Offered HIV Tests"**

**Associated Press (08.17.09):: Kimberly Hefling**

In line with CDC recommendations, the Veterans Affairs Department announced Monday it will offer routine, opt-out HIV testing to all veterans receiving medical care at its facilities.

Under the new policy, VA staff will provide HIV education materials and discuss testing, but they will not be required to use standardized, pre-test counseling or to obtain written consent. To be tested, veterans must give their verbal consent, which will be noted in the medical chart. The hope is that by dropping the written consent provision, more veterans will get tested, learn their status, and begin treatment earlier if they are infected.

As with any test, veterans will be able to withdraw their consent prior to the screening. And the VA stressed that veterans who decline to be tested will not lose medical benefits or any right to care. Approximately 22,000 veterans with HIV receive care at VA facilities.

For more information on the change in VA policy, visit <http://www.hiv.va.gov/vahiv?page=test-consent-faq>. To review CDC's recommendations for HIV testing in medical settings, visit [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm).