

For Immediate Release



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Contact: John Yeager | 425-765-9845 | JYeager@BloodworksNW.org
Karen Kirby | 206-689-6359 | karenk@bloodworksnw.org

Bloodworks Northwest Implements Updated Donor Criteria for Gay and Bisexual Men

Bloodworks Northwest Fulfills Implementation of FDA's New Assessment Guidance for All Blood Donors

SEATTLE (December 6, 2023) – [Bloodworks Northwest](https://www.bloodworksnw.org), the primary blood supplier to hospitals in the Pacific Northwest, has updated its processes to align with new Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance easing restrictions on donations by men who have sex with men (MSM), effective starting today, December 6, 2023.

The new FDA guidance was issued on May 11, 2023, replacing outdated blood donor restrictions based on gender and sexual orientation with individual, risk-based criteria. Bloodworks Northwest is now asking all potential donors to answer the same set of [health history questions](#) assessing their human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) risk, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. Questions regarding sexual history, previously targeted to MSM, will now apply to all donors.

The criteria will now focus on sexual contact associated with a higher risk of disease transmission. All potential donors will be asked whether, in the three months prior to their date of donation, they have:

- Had sexual contact with a new partner. If so, they will be asked if they have had anal sex in the last three months.
- Had sexual contact with more than one partner. If so, they will be asked if they have had anal sex in the last three months.

Anyone who has had sexual contact with a new partner or more than one partner, along with having had anal sex in the past three months, is at increased risk for transmitting HIV and other infectious diseases and will be deferred for three months.

This change is a step in the right direction, but not conclusive in all cases. Based on current guidance from the FDA, those taking preventative HIV medications (such as PrEP or PEP) are still deferred for three months from their most recent oral use. Available data suggests that the use of PrEP or PEP may delay the detection of low-levels of HIV in screening tests for blood donations, potentially resulting in false negative results in infected individuals. The risks must be carefully evaluated and approved by the FDA before this deferral can be lifted.

“Bloodworks Northwest’s mission supports every eligible person in the community saving lives every day, and we have enthusiastically advocated for equality and inclusivity in the donation process while maintaining blood safety based on science,” said Bloodworks Northwest’s Co-Chief Medical Officer Dr. Kirsten Watson Alcorn. “This FDA policy change is based on the individual behavior of the prospective donor and not on their sexual orientation or gender. This means that all prospective donors will be evaluated along the same principles and guidelines when donating blood. Today we celebrate and welcome those who have previously been deferred.”

Many Washington and Oregon businesses have spoken out to show support of Bloodworks Northwest and the FDA changes, including the Seattle-based advertising and marketing agency GreenRubino, which is conducting a blood drive and center takeover on December 6 at the Central Donor Center. The LGBTQ-owned agency and certified LGBT Business Enterprise (LGBTBE) has been a long-standing partner of Bloodworks Northwest.

"The FDA's decision to ease blood donation restrictions marks a pivotal step toward inclusivity," said John Rubino, partner at GreenRubino. "This move, grounded in science and nondiscrimination, aligns with GreenRubino’s core values. We proudly support this change alongside our partners at Bloodworks Northwest, as they foster a safe and inclusive donation process for our local community. I look forward to participating as a donor myself and encouraging others to embrace this positive shift in our healthcare system."

Bloodworks Northwest has long supported changing the policy regarding blood donation by MSM to a more equitable process and increasing the pool of eligible donors. These efforts have

been years in the making, as the nonprofit advocated for change and consistently supported research to push the FDA in this direction.

For a look back at Bloodworks' history of pushing for change ahead of implementing the new, more inclusive guidelines, [watch this video](#). For the most up-to-date information on medication deferrals and other eligibility requirements, please visit www.bloodworksnw.org/eligibility.

For more specific information on the new guidelines, see the [FDA's website](#). To book an appointment or gather more information, please visit BloodworksNW.org or call 800-398-7888.

About Bloodworks Northwest

Donations to Bloodworks Northwest provide lifesaving blood supply to 95% of Pacific Northwest hospitals. Since 1944, Bloodworks has served the Pacific Northwest as a local, nonprofit, independent, volunteer-supported and community-based blood center and research institute. Bloodworks partners closely with local hospitals to deliver the highest level of patient care. Its comprehensive services include blood components, complex cross-matching, specialized lab services for organ transplants, care for patients with blood disorders and collection of cord blood stem cells for cancer treatment. Bloodworks Research Institute performs leading-edge research in blood biology, transfusion medicine, blood storage and treatment of blood disorders. Patients with traumatic injuries, undergoing surgeries or organ transplantation or receiving treatment for cancer and blood disorders all depend on its services, expertise, laboratories and research. Blood donation appointments can be scheduled at BloodworksNW.org.

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