The Northern California Community Blood Bank believes that everyone in our community should have the opportunity to be part of meeting the needs of the patients we serve.

When unable to donate individuals may feel excluded or rejected, and while this is never our intention we must recognize and attempt to address that feeling. We recognize that in the United States only 37% of the population is eligible to donate and that every month in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties as many as 150 people are deferred from donating. We value the feelings of community members who are not able to donate. There are a number of ways for individuals to help the Blood Bank serve our mission. They include:

- Help educate the community about the need for blood donation
- Volunteer in our canteen or at a blood drive
- Sponsor & organize business or community drives
- One-on-one & group recruitment of new donors
- Work with us to address deferral issues that should be changed

For the past 15 years two groups representing community blood banks; America’s Blood Centers and the AABB, along with the American Red Cross, have recommended to the Blood Products Advisory Committee that the lifetime deferral for men who have had sex with men (MSM) be modified to a time limited deferral.

And the FDA responded - In December of 2015 the FDA announced that they would change the deferral criteria from a lifetime deferral to a 1 year deferral.

In May of 2016, the first revisions to the Universal Donor History Questionnaire were approved by the FDA for implementation by blood centers.

Since 2016, a number of countries have moved to shorter deferral periods and ABC and AABC have conducted studies to determine what impact a shorter deferral period would have on the safety of the blood supply.

This was a major step and an acknowledgement that the F.D.A. can reexamine existing policies if enough people make their voices heard, but this is by no means the end for this issue. Many people believe that there is a scientific basis for a new approach to ensuring the safety of the blood supply.

What’s the next Step?

Tell the F.D.A., more progress is needed.

Make your opinion known to the people who make these decisions! If you are deferred from donating, if you know someone who is, or you’re just bothered that this rule exists, write to the Commissioner of the F.D.A., the Directors of the offices involved and the Blood Products Advisory Board.