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## ON WORLD AIDS DAY, FLORIDA HEALTH RENEWS COMMITMENT TO FIGHTING HIV, HELPING THOSE WHO ARE POSITIVE LEAD LONG, HEALTHY LIVES



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**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.**—Today, the Florida Department of Health unites with people and communities worldwide in recognition of World AIDS Day to show our support for people living with HIV and commemorate those who have died. More than 1.2 million people are currently living with HIV in the U.S. and almost one in eight are unaware they are infected. The department remains fully committed to fighting the spread of HIV in Florida and helping connect individuals who are positive with lifesaving treatment and services.

“Today we honor those who have died and those who are living with HIV by accelerating our efforts in the fight against this potentially devastating disease,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary Dr. Celeste Philip. “Testing all individuals 13-64 years old at least once, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is critical to identifying infections. We can then begin appropriate and effective treatment and help people lead long, healthy and fulfilling lives. I encourage all Floridians to know their status and get tested through your health care provider or your county health department. We are here to help you before, during and after a diagnosis.”

Florida is a national leader in HIV testing. We have made great strides in prevention, identifying infections early and getting people into treatment, however there is still much work to be done. The department is focusing on four key strategies to make an even greater impact on reducing HIV rates in Florida and getting to zero, including:

- Routine screening for HIV and implementation of CDC testing guidelines;
- Increased testing among high-risk populations and providing immediate access to treatment as well as re-engaging HIV positive persons into the care system, with the ultimate goal of getting HIV positive persons to an undetectable viral load;
- The use of PrEP and nPEP as prevention strategies to reduce the risk of contracting HIV; and
- Increased community outreach and awareness about HIV, high-risk behaviors, the importance of knowing one’s status and if positive, quickly accessing and staying in treatment.

With early diagnosis, individuals can begin appropriate treatment and care resulting in better health outcomes. Studies have shown that providing antiretroviral therapy as early as possible

after diagnosis improves a patient's health, reduces transmission and can eventually lead to undetectable viral loads of HIV. This model has been implemented in other cities and is being piloted in Miami-Dade County.

The department provides high-quality HIV testing services using the latest technology at each of the 67 county health departments. Last year, more than 378,000 tests were conducted.

Click [here](#) for a video from State Surgeon General Dr. Celeste Philip in recognition of World AIDS Day.

For more information, call the Florida AIDS Hotline at 1-800-FLA-AIDS or 1-800-352-2437; En Espanol, 1-800-545-SIDA; In Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101.

For more information and to find a local HIV testing site near you, visit [www.AIDS.gov](http://www.AIDS.gov).

### **About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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