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ON WORLD AIDS DAY, FLORIDA HEALTH CONTINUES STATEWIDE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS



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Tallahassee, Fla.— Florida Department of Health unites with people and communities worldwide as we observe World AIDS Day by showing support for people living with HIV and honoring those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. This year’s national theme is “Increasing Impact through Transparency, Accountability, and Partnerships.”

“The strides that we’ve made as a country and as a state in the fight to curtail the spread of HIV would not have been possible without vast networks of community partnerships,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary Dr. Celeste Philip. “In Florida alone, we work with more than 1,400 registered test sites, 200 businesses and faith-based partners, as well as 75 additional service providers who help with testing, linkage to care and outreach. Today, I ask all of our partners to come together to honor those who have died and to support people living with HIV/AIDS to enjoy long, healthy lives.”

Over 1.1 million people in the US are living with HIV, and one in seven people do not know it. 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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all individuals 13-64 years old be tested at least one. 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 other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) 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 successfully implemented in Florida and there are currently 35 Test and Treat sites operating statewide.

As part of our strategic efforts to eliminate HIV in Florida, the Department of Health is currently working to make Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) medication available at no cost at all of the 67 county health departments within the next year. PrEP is a once-daily pill that can reduce the risk of acquiring HIV in HIV-negative individuals. **PrEP should be used in conjunction with other prevention methods like condoms to reduce the risk of infection.** According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), taking PrEP daily reduces the risk of getting HIV by more than 90 percent.

PrEP will be made available through CHD STD and Family Planning Clinics and patients can be provided with up to a 90-day supply of medications. Some CHDs may offer PrEP through a specialty clinic. Visit floridahealth.gov to locate the CHD in your county.

Every CHD also offers high-quality HIV testing services. Testing can be completed at your local county health department or you can locate HIV counseling, testing and referral sites by visiting www.KnowYourHIVStatus.com or texting your zip code to 477493.

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.

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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