

February 7, 2018

FLORIDA HEALTH OBSERVES NATIONAL BLACK HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY



Contact:

Communications Office

NewsMedia@flhealth.gov

850-245-4111

Tallahassee, Fla.— The Florida Department of Health joins community partners across the country today in recognizing National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD). NBHAAD was founded to bring attention to the growing HIV and AIDS epidemic in black communities. The theme this year, “Stay the Course, the Fight is Not Over!”, aims to challenge communities and encourage people to get educated, get involved, get tested, and get treated to receive the continuum of care needed to live a healthful life with HIV/AIDS.

State Surgeon General and Secretary Dr. Celeste Philip said, “On National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, we recognize the disproportional burden HIV has on the black community. More black individuals are living with HIV in Florida than any other racial or ethnic group. Over the last decade, the department has worked to address this disparity and has mobilized resources to address this epidemic in minority communities through innovative interventions and initiatives. Significant progress has been made, but as this year’s theme suggests, there is more work to be done. We continue to focus on identifying and addressing the root causes and various social and economic factors that increase someone’s risk of contracting HIV.”

Blacks make up only 15 percent of Florida’s population, yet they comprise more than 42 percent of Florida’s HIV cases diagnosed in 2016. One in 47 black adults have HIV compared to one in 181 Hispanics and one in 284 white individuals. While blacks are still disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS, Florida has made strides. Florida has seen an overall 42 percent decrease in HIV case rates among blacks since 2005, moving the cause of death from HIV among blacks ages 25-44 from 1st to 5th statewide in 2016.

The department is focusing on four key strategies to make an even greater impact on reducing HIV rates in Florida including:

- Routine screening for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and implementation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) testing guidelines;
- Increased testing among populations at increased risk for HIV and providing immediate access to treatment as well as re-engaging persons living with HIV (PLWH) into the care system, with the ultimate goal of getting PLWH 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, engagement, 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 HIV 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, can lead to undetectable viral loads of HIV, which can ultimately reduce transmission. There is currently a gap the department is working to address between black PLWHs in care vs. white or Hispanic PLWHs – which impacts the ability for a black PLWH to achieve a suppressed viral load. In 2016, only 55 percent of black PLWHs achieved a suppressed viral load as compared to 67 percent of whites and 63 percent of Hispanic PLWH.

CDC recommends that all individuals 13-64 years old be tested for HIV at least once during their lifetime, and persons at increased risk for HIV infection be tested at least annually. Florida is a national leader in HIV testing, with over 1,400 registered HIV testing sites statewide.

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 end entering your zip code into the test site locator.

For more information, call the Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline at 1-800-FLA-AIDS or 1-800-352-2437; en Español, 1-800-545-SIDA; or in Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101.

To learn more about NBHAAD or to find a local NBHAAD event in your area, click [here](#).

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.