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LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR AND STATE SURGEON GENERAL JOIN DOH-LEON AT WORLD AIDS DAY EVENT



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Tallahassee, Fla. – Each year on December 1, World AIDS Day is observed internationally. This year’s national World AIDS Day theme was “Ending the HIV Epidemic: Equitable Access, Everyone’s Voice.” This year marked the 40th anniversary of the first reported official cases of what later became known as AIDS.

The Florida Department of Health in Leon County (DOH-Leon) hosted a World AIDS Day event with community stakeholders throughout the county to raise awareness of HIV, to connect persons living with HIV with resources, and to remember those that have been lost. The event included a Health and Wellness Exhibition, community vendors, and the premiere screening of an HIV public service video. Lunch was also provided to attendees.

The event featured Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez and State Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo, who gave remarks regarding the importance of HIV testing, treatment, and prevention. A recording of their remarks can be found [here](#).

“We’ve gone from thinking of an HIV diagnosis as a death sentence to producing antiretroviral therapies that provide people with long, healthy lives,” **said Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez**. “We have come a long way, but there is still much work to be done.”

Florida experiences a high disease burden of HIV. In 2020, there were 117,447 people living with HIV in the state, 3,504 of whom were newly diagnosed. That same year, HIV- or AIDS-related illness claimed the lives of 642 Floridians.

“The tools that we have are testing, treatment, and prevention. Those are effective tools to reduce the burden of HIV,” **said State Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo**. “There’s an enormous opportunity in the state with HIV to make a real difference in people’s lives.”

From 2018 to 2019, there was an observed four percent decrease in new HIV diagnoses in Florida. The decrease in HIV diagnoses along with the ongoing annual decrease in AIDS diagnoses suggests that the state’s strategies are having a positive impact on health outcomes.

Florida is recognized as a national leader in HIV testing, and DOH has and continues to be committed to ending the HIV epidemic. In 2019, the state took its already robust HIV testing program to a new level by launching the HIV self-test kit program. To date, nearly 5,000 self-test kits have been distributed, allowing Floridians to learn their HIV status in the privacy and comfort of their own home. Floridians can request a free self-test kit by visiting KnowYourHIVStatus.com.

“The road toward an AIDS-free generation is long, but as we mark this important observance, we should also remember that if we move forward every day with the same passion, persistence, and drive that has brought us this far, then we have the right dynamic to reach our goal,” **said DOH-Leon Health Officer Claudia Blackburn.**

Protect yourself. Get tested. Know your status. Learn what’s next.

Knowing your status is the first step toward effective HIV prevention. People can reduce their risk for HIV by using appropriate prevention strategies, such as taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), using protection, and getting tested regularly. Contact a health care provider to find out if PrEP is recommended for you. Additionally, people living with HIV who take antiretroviral medication as prescribed and have an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners. All 67 county health departments provide HIV testing, PrEP, and other HIV-related services.

We have the power to both prevent and treat HIV. Visit [KnowYourHIVStatus.com](https://www.floridahealth.gov/communicable-diseases/hiv-aids/knownyourhivstatus.com) to learn about testing options in your area or to order a free at-home HIV testing kit mailed directly to the address of your choice. For more information, call 1-800-FLA-AIDS, or 1-800-35224371; en Espanol, 1-800-545-SIDA; in Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101.

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