

December 28, 2021

YEAR IN REVIEW: DOH PROTECTING AND PROMOTING THE HEALTH OF ALL FLORIDIANS



Contact:

Communications Office
NewsMedia@flhealth.gov
850-245-4111

Tallahassee, Fla. — Today, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) is highlighting its efforts to further Governor DeSantis' comprehensive approach to respond to COVID-19 and to improve the health of all Floridians. DOH has renewed its efforts to promote successful health outcomes by focusing on the overall health of Floridians.

"There is a lot of great work being done to advance public health in Florida," **said State Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo**. "This year's accomplishments demonstrate the dedicated and tireless efforts of Florida Department of Health staff and partners throughout the state."

Launching COVID-19 Early Treatment Network and Saving Countless Lives

Beginning in August, Governor DeSantis charged DOH with launching a network of state-run monoclonal antibody treatment sites statewide in a matter of weeks. At their peak, these sites were serving 5,000 patients a day, and nearly 30,000 per week. Florida responded with this innovative network to save thousands of people from being admitted to the hospital, alleviating pressure on the state's hospital system. In a matter of weeks, the state had 25 monoclonal antibody sites up and running —leading the nation in widespread early COVID-19 treatment availability.

Focusing on Overall Health for Floridians Through Healthier You Initiative

This year, DOH launched a new initiative: *Healthier You*. This initiative serves as a one-stop shop for Floridians to access resources to promote a healthy lifestyle. The *Healthier You* initiative bolsters efforts to improve Floridians' knowledge of how to best support their overall health.

Healthier You promotes overall health by educating the public on ways to improve habits such as staying active, learning new recipes, and boosting nutritional intake. This is a resource that encourages Floridians of all ages to get active, go outside, improve nutrition, including vitamin D intake, and learn about [COVID-19](#).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xy61W6KWroA>

Click above to watch the new public service announcement about *Healthier You* launched in November.

Achieving Monumental Success Through Nationally Renowned Tobacco Free Florida Campaign

In 2020, Tobacco Free Florida’s statewide youth prevention media campaign, [THE FACTS NOW](#), continued to demonstrate high brand awareness among Florida youth (79%) and young adults (70%). In 2021, the youth e-cigarette prevention campaign, *Textimonials*, part of *THE FACTS NOW* campaign, aired three new additional ads. The ads feature real testimonials from young e-cigarette users told in the language they speak—texting. These ads highlight how e-cigarette use can have serious effects on people’s lives, even young adults. The *Textimonials* campaign consists of a total of five spots, each with a testimony of the addictive effects of vaping nicotine.

Tobacco Free Florida met DOH’s strategic objective to decrease current inhaled nicotine prevalence in youth by December 31, 2021.



<https://youtu.be/wfL5tANO2Ho>

Click above to learn about Garrett's story featured in the *Textimonials* campaign.

Serving Children with Special Health Care Needs

Every day, the Division of Children's Medical Services works diligently to ensure children with special health care needs in Florida are protected and served by the State of Florida. Within this division:

Florida's Child Protection Team providers referred 100% of children diagnosed with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome to DOH's Early Steps Program, Florida's early intervention system for eligible infants and toddlers, ages 0 to 36 months, who are at risk for developmental delays.

The Early Steps Program served 54,331 children. Of the 54,331 served by Early Steps, 97% of infants and toddlers received services within 30 days. This provides the opportunity for early intervention that allows children in Florida to reach their fullest potential.

Expediting Medical Licensure to Ensure Strong Health Care Workforce

The Division of Medical Quality Assurance launched an effective health care workforce mitigation strategy during COVID-19 by accelerating and expediting licensing. The division assessed its resources and redistributed staff to allow for faster processing of licensure applications for health care practitioners known to be responding to COVID-19 and in most demand.

During the first three quarters of 2021, the division received 125,201 initial applications and issued 102,652 licenses for health care practitioners—processing nearly 81% of the applications received in one business day.

Prioritizing Veteran Resources

DOH recognizes the sacrifices made by courageous citizens to protect our country and supports our military-connected residents and their families. With 1.5 million veterans, Florida ranks third in the nation for veteran population, and is working to meet the Governor's mission to become the most military-friendly state. During the COVID-19 public health emergency, Florida National Guard soldiers and airmen worked alongside public health professionals to maintain testing and vaccination sites.

To support mental health initiatives during the COVID-19 response, DOH launched a social media campaign and included the Florida Veterans Support Line, 1-844-MyFLVet (693-5838). This statewide toll-free number for veterans and their loved ones is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emotional support and information pertaining to community resources. It is coordinated by the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay 211 and is answered primarily by trained veterans. The line was advertised on billboards, social media platforms, and public service announcements.

Remaining A National Leader in HIV Testing

Florida is recognized as a national leader in HIV testing, and under the leadership of State Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo, 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. Since launching the Self-Test Kit Program in 2019, the HIV Prevention Program has distributed almost 5,000 test kits, allowing Floridians to learn their HIV status in the privacy and comfort of their own homes. Floridians can request a free self-test kit by visiting [KnowYourHIVStatus.com](https://www.floridahealth.gov/communicable-diseases/hiv-aids/knownyourhivstatus.com).

About the Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health, 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.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). For more information, please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.