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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN DUVAL ENCOURAGES FLORIDIANS TO GET TESTED ON NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY



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Jacksonville, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health in Duval County recognizes June 27th as National HIV Testing Day. This year’s theme is “Test Your Way. Do It Today,” which serves as a reminder that HIV testing has never been more convenient because there are more ways than ever to get tested.

“Knowing your HIV status empowers you to make informed decisions about your health,” said Erin Hess, Interim Administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Duval County. “Symptoms of HIV can mirror those of the common cold and may not appear for years after contracting the virus, so the only way you can know for sure if you have HIV is to get tested. We want people to understand that an HIV diagnosis does not stop someone from living a full and healthy life. Now is the time to get tested and take control of your health.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (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 remains a national leader in HIV testing, with over 1,400 registered HIV test sites (including each county health department and community-based organizations) which provide high-quality, confidential testing services at low or no cost. Last year, more than 340,000 HIV tests were conducted through Florida’s registered HIV test sites. Testing is also available through doctor’s offices and other health care facilities.

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 HIV viral loads.

The Florida Department of Health in Duval County will be offering free HIV testing on June 27th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at 515 W. 6th Street. Those who want to get tested are encouraged to bring their partner or a friend. The rapid tests can deliver HIV tests results in 15 minutes.

HIV-negative individuals are encouraged to reduce the chance of contracting HIV by using prevention strategies. As part of our strategic efforts to eliminate HIV in Florida, the Department is working to make Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) medication available at no cost at all 67

CHDs by the end of this year. PrEP is a once-daily pill that can reduce the chance of acquiring HIV in HIV-negative individuals. **PrEP should be used in conjunction with other prevention methods like condoms to reduce the chance of infection.** According to CDC, taking PrEP daily reduces the chance of getting HIV by more than 90 percent.

PrEP will be made available through CHD Sexually Transmitted Disease 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. Find a PrEP provider near you with the department's [PrEP Providers List](#).

You can locate HIV counseling, testing and referral sites by visiting www.KnowYourHIVStatus.com or texting 'FLHIV' to 898211.

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; In Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101. To chat with a live counselor at the Florida HIV/AIDS Hotline, visit www.211bigbend.org/flhivaidshotline.

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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