

December 1, 2019

## **IN OBSERVANCE OF WORLD AIDS DAY “LET’S TALK COMMUNITY HEALTH” BY TAKING CONTROL**



**Contact:**

Arlease Hall [Arlease.Hall@FLHealth.gov](mailto:Arlease.Hall@FLHealth.gov) Public Information Officer  
772.370.1391

**St. Lucie County, FL** - The Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie unite with partners worldwide in observance of World AIDS Day on December 1, we reaffirm our commitment and continue to mobilize and fight the spread of HIV/AIDS in Florida. A major focus is connecting individuals who are positive with lifesaving treatment and services. The nation is rallying behind this year’s theme, “Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Community by Community”.

“As we parallel the national initiative, we continue with our local theme, “Let’s Talk Community Health”. Our goal is to provide access and education to individuals to have a healthier lifestyle physically and mentally whether you are HIV-positive or not. We extend an invitation for you to join DOH-St. Lucie, in collaboration with Project Response Inc. and Jaber’s Pharmacy, as we raise the awareness about HIV, the medical advances and celebrate those living a healthy life with HIV. We commemorate the lives that were lost to the AIDS epidemic, we invite the community to participate in our efforts to fight the spread of HIV in St. Lucie, as we connect individuals to resources, and health services available here in St. Lucie”, said Clint Sperber, Health Officer for the Florida Department of Health in St. Lucie County.

- ❖ **Join us on Monday, December 2, 2019 | Candle Light Vigil**  
**Location: Fort Pierce City Hall | 100 US Hwy. 1, Fort Pierce, FL 34950**  
**5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**
  
- ❖ **Join us Saturday, December 7, 2019 | World AIDS Day event:**  
**Location: Jaber’s Pharmacy – 2210 Orange Avenue, Fort Pierce, FL 34950**  
**10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

***Information and services provided on-site:***

- ✓ Dental Resources information
- ✓ Community Health Providers (on-site)
- ✓ PrEP Services (pill that protects against HIV- learn more)
- ✓ Health Screenings & Physical Exams
- ✓ Hepatitis A Vaccines
- ✓ Flu Shots Available
- ✓ Community Resources

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. Over 1.1 million people in the US are living with HIV, but one in seven HIV-positive people do not know they are living with the disease. Those persons living with HIV who are unaware of their status can account for more than 49% of new infections each year. Therefore, DOH-St. Lucie remains fully focused and committed to promoting HIV prevention, increasing education and providing lifesaving treatment.

Florida is a national leader in HIV testing. We have made great strides in prevention, early identification and treatment, however there is still much work to be done. In an effort to reach the goal of zero new HIV transmissions and reduced HIV-related deaths, the department's focus is on four key strategies:

1. Implementing routine screening for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, especially among high-risk populations.
2. Providing immediate access to treatment for the newly diagnosed as well as retaining HIV-positive persons in the care system, with the ultimate goal of getting HIV-positive persons to an undetectable viral load.
3. Improving and promoting the use of PrEP and nPEP as prevention strategies to reduce the risk of contracting HIV.
4. Increasing community outreach and awareness about HIV, high-risk behaviors and the importance of knowing one's status.

There are several registered testing site locations throughout the state of Florida. With early diagnosis, individuals can begin appropriate treatment and care resulting in better health outcomes. Receiving antiretroviral therapy as quickly as possible after diagnosis improves the health of persons living with HIV and can eventually lead to undetectable viral loads, which reduces the chance of transmission to others. DOH-St. Lucie is a designated test and treat site providing individuals who are diagnosed with HIV the opportunity to receive HIV care the same day. Our HIV case management team, will assist with providing financial and community resources to patients for medical care and services.

As part of our strategic efforts to eliminate HIV in Florida, the department has made Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) medication available at no cost to all of the 67 county health departments (CHDs). PrEP is a once-daily pill that can reduce HIV-negative individuals' risk of acquiring HIV. **PrEP should be used in conjunction with other prevention methods, like condoms, to reduce the risk of transmission.** According to the CDC, taking PrEP daily, reduces the risk of contracting HIV by more than 90 percent.

The PrEP services provided by DOH-St. Lucie includes meeting with a medical provider to discuss PrEP medication, an initial examination along with scheduled follow-up appointments, laboratory testing, free 30-day supply of PrEP medication Truvada, and assistance with Patient Assistance Programs if patients are under or uninsured.

Patients can obtain up to a 90-day supply of PrEP through their local CHD, STD and Family Planning Clinic. Some CHDs may offer PrEP through specialty clinics. View the department's [www.PrEPLocator.org](http://www.PrEPLocator.org) to find a PrEP provider in your area. Every CHD offers high-quality HIV

testing services, but you can also locate HIV counseling, testing and referral sites by visiting [www.KnowYourHIVStatus.com](http://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 Español, 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.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](http://www.FloridaHealth.gov).

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