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DOH-OKALOOSA RECOGNIZES WORLD AIDS DAY 2022



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FT. WALTON BEACH, Fla. – Each year on December 1, World AIDS Day is observed around the globe, serving as a memorial for those lost to HIV and as an opportunity to make people aware of enhanced HIV prevention and treatment options. This year's World AIDS Day theme is "**Putting Ourselves to the Test: Achieving Equity to End HIV**," which encourages people to unite globally to eliminate the barriers to HIV testing, prevention, and treatment that are holding back progress on ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County stands in solidarity with people and communities across the globe on World AIDS Day, especially our local community and partners that work every day to help end the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Florida has made great strides to reduce HIV transmission and continues to work toward eliminating HIV-related deaths by providing equitable access to HIV prevention and care services. The rate of HIV deaths among all persons diagnosed with HIV in Florida has declined by 31% over the last decade, but there is still more progress to be made. In 2021, there were 120,502 people living with HIV in Florida, 4,708 of whom were newly diagnosed. In Okaloosa County, there were 496 people living with HIV in 2021.

"Today we have more HIV treatment, testing and prevention options than ever before," said Elizabeth Smith, Health Officer, DOH-Okaloosa. "DOH-Okaloosa offers multiple forms of no-cost HIV testing, including at-home HIV test kits."

It is important that people know their options when it comes to HIV prevention and treatment. Medication-based HIV prevention—called pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP—and HIV treatment are both based around antiretroviral therapy. Until recently, these medications were only available in pill form. Now, HIV prevention and treatment has evolved to include long-acting injectables. These medications are as effective as daily pills and provide individuals with additional options. Ensuring every single person has an HIV prevention or treatment option that works for them is key to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

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

Knowing your status is the first step toward effective HIV prevention and treatment. 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.

If you test positive for HIV, seeking HIV treatment is critical. Antiretroviral therapy can help people live longer, healthier lives. People living with HIV who take antiretroviral medication as prescribed and have an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to their sexual

partners. Both PrEP and HIV treatment medications are now available as pills and long-acting injectables.

We have the power to both prevent and treat HIV. Visit the [Know Your HIV Status](#) website to learn about testing options near you or 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 1-800-352-2437; en español, 1-800-545-SIDA; in Creole, 1-800-AIDS-101.

To learn more about DOH-Okaloosa's prevention and treatment options or to schedule an appointment for a no-cost HIV test, call 850-833-9246 or visit the [DOH-Okaloosa webpage](#).

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