

PRESS RELEASE



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Prince George's County Health Department Making Progress in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS as it Commemorates 30th Anniversary of World AIDS Day *County hosting free community HIV testing event to highlight importance of regular testing and early treatment*

LARGO, MD – On World AIDS Day, Saturday, December 1st, the Prince George's County Health Department will provide free HIV tests and other health services to the community at the Palmer Park Community Center, located at [7720 Barlowe Road, Landover, MD 20785](https://www.palmerpark.com/) from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The theme of World AIDS Day 2018 is “Know Your Status” to highlight the importance of routine testing for adults and adolescents. If test results indicate an HIV positive result, receiving early treatment will reduce a person's viral load, which increases his or her chance of living longer while greatly reducing the chance of passing the virus on to someone else.

According to 2017 Maryland Department of Health data, Prince George's County had the highest number of new HIV cases in the state with 320 people testing positive in 2017. There were 319 new cases in 2016. However, each of the last two years represent the two lowest yearly totals of new HIV cases in Prince George's County since 2001, during which 282 people tested HIV positive. Moreover, state data show the county recorded its highest percentage ever – 93.6 percent – of new HIV patients in 2017 getting linked to HIV care within three months of a diagnosis to begin viral load suppression medication.

“Our message to residents to ‘know your status’ by getting regular HIV tests and, if positive, entering early treatment is resonating with the community,” said Prince George's County Health Officer Pamela Creekmur. “We are seeing progress in the number of new cases and more people

are living longer with the virus, thanks in large part to the increased services offered by the Health Department and our community partners. But, we still have a lot of work to do as we continue to see African-Americans, especially African-American gay or bisexual men, account for the majority of HIV diagnoses in our region and nationwide. We need to continue encouraging safe sex practices and addressing socioeconomic elements that factor into the overall health and welfare of minority communities heavily impacted by HIV/AIDS: lack of affordable housing; limited access to education and health care; and malnutrition, substance use, incarceration and poverty.”

According to U.S. Census data, African-Americans comprise 62 percent of Prince George’s County’s population, but represent 83 percent of those in the county living with HIV. Currently, there are 7,361 county residents (ages 13 and older) living with HIV. Additional county residents are likely HIV positive but don’t know it. Hence, the importance of testing for at-risk residents.

The Prince George’s County Health Department offers free HIV testing and treatment. Learn more about the program: <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/1883/HIV-AIDS-Program>. HIV testing and treatment are also available at four [School-Based Wellness Centers](#) as well as for teens and young adults at the [Healthy Teens and Young Adults Center](#).

In addition to free HIV testing and educational materials, the county’s December 1st World AIDS Day event will also feature free blood pressure and glaucoma screenings, free flu shots, Zumba classes, raffle prizes and face painting.

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