



# THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN OKEECHOBEE COUNTY OBSERVES NATIONAL HIV TESTING DAY 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Okeechobee, Fla.** — National HIV Testing Day is observed each year on June 27 to encourage people to be aware of their HIV status. This year's theme, "**My Test, My Way,**" highlights that there are many options available when it comes to HIV testing. The Florida Department of Health works with community partners throughout the state to help provide all Floridians access to the right tools for learning their HIV status and staying healthy.

"We should continue working to end the HIV epidemic," said State Surgeon General Dr. Scott Rivkees. "Every Floridian needs to know their HIV status. Whether it's taking a test alone at home, going to a clinic, or even an outreach event with a friend, we encourage Floridians to break the stigma and know their status."

"Our local health department has a vital HIV/AIDS program which connects residents to important programs and services," said Bret Smith, Interim Administrator at the Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County. "Services include HIV testing, treatment for those living with HIV/AIDS and prevention efforts such as our PrEP program which helps to reduce the risk of viral transmission."

In 2019, 4,584 people were diagnosed with HIV in Florida. At the end of that year, 116,689 Floridians were confirmed to be living with HIV. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that this [accounts for only 86.5% of all people with HIV in Florida](#), meaning that there are many Floridians who have yet to be diagnosed. Earlier diagnosis of HIV leads to more successful treatment, so getting tested and learning your HIV status is crucial to your health.

People can reduce their risk for HIV by using appropriate prevention strategies, such as using condoms, getting tested regularly and taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Contact a health care provider to find out if PrEP is recommended for you. People living with HIV who take

antiretroviral medication as prescribed and achieve an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners.

The Florida Department of Health in Okeechobee County will be hosting the following events:

**Date: 6/25/2021**

**Event Activities: Free HIV Testing**

**Address: 1728 NW 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Okeechobee FL**

**Time: 9 a.m. -12 p.m.**

**Protect yourself. Get tested. Know your status. Learn what is next.**

We have the power to both prevent and treat HIV. For more information, call (863) 462-5800 or 1-800-FLA-AIDS or visit [www.KnowYourHIVStatus.com](http://www.KnowYourHIVStatus.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.

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