

December 1, 2015

BREAK THE SILENCE IN OBSERVANCE OF WORLD AIDS DAY

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Sanford, Fla. – World AIDS Day is held on December 1 each year and is an opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died. The theme of [World AIDS Day 2015](#) is “The Time to Act is Now.” In observance of World AIDS Day, the Florida Department of Health in Seminole County (DOH-Seminole) will offer free HIV testing on December 1 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and noon to 3 p.m. at 400 West Airport Boulevard, Sanford, Florida.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends that everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 be tested for HIV at least once, with those at increased risk testing more frequently. Late diagnosis is associated with poorer health outcomes and more rapid disease progression. Early diagnosis and treatment are critical to a longer, healthier life for those infected with HIV.

“One in eight people in the United States who have HIV do not know they are infected,” said Preston Boyce, Operations and Management Consultant for DOH-Seminole. “Unlike some other viruses, the human body cannot get rid of HIV. That means once you have HIV, you have it for life.”

According to the [Florida Department of Health](#), a total of 109,969 persons were living with a diagnosis of HIV infection in Florida through 2014. African Americans accounted for forty-seven percent (n=51,496) of all infections. The survival time from AIDS diagnosis to death is significantly shorter for African Americans than other racial/ethnic groups.

“HIV is preventable,” said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole. “African Americans account for forty-four percent of all new HIV infections in the United States. In Seminole County, African Americans have a higher rate of reported cases of HIV than Caucasians. Central Florida incidence of HIV is on the up tic.”

Break the silence:

- Raise awareness about HIV disease and related risks;
- Encourage individuals to be tested for HIV; If you are living with HIV/AIDS, get in to treatment and care;
- Reduce barriers to HIV testing, prevention and care by reducing HIV/AIDS stigma; and
- Disseminate information on the health benefits of condoms and other risk reduction measures.

Visit seminolecohealth.com for more information. The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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