



Health Alert Network Message 22-32: Increasing HIV Diagnoses Across Louisiana

Origination Date:
September 29, 2022

Revision Dates (List All Revision Dates):

To: Medical Providers and Community Leaders in Louisiana

From: Joseph Kanter, MD, Louisiana State Health Officer

Date: September 29, 2022

Subject: Increasing HIV Diagnoses across Louisiana

Situation summary:

- In 2021, 934 people were newly diagnosed with HIV in Louisiana. From 2018-2020, Louisiana averaged 859 people newly diagnosed with HIV per year.
- **In 2020, Louisiana had the 4th highest HIV diagnosis rate in the United States.**
- The majority of people newly diagnosed with HIV were gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBM), comprising 60% of diagnoses in 2021. Black GBM are disproportionately represented among people newly diagnosed with HIV, comprising 37% of new HIV diagnoses.
- Of all people newly diagnosed with HIV in 2021, 74% were male, 41% were under 30 years old, and 63% were Black non-Hispanic.

The rise in people newly diagnosed with HIV is alarming and, notably, this increase is occurring in both rural and urban areas of the state. The Louisiana Department of Health's **Office of Public Health requests that all healthcare professionals and community leaders in the state join us in addressing the rise of new HIV diagnoses.**

All community and medical providers should ensure their patients are aware of HIV prevention options. These include Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), and an understanding that people with HIV who take their HIV medicine as prescribed and who achieve and maintain viral suppression (undetectable) can stay healthy and will not transmit HIV to their sex partners. – this is known as undetectable equals untransmittable (or U=U). More information can be found at <https://louisianahealthhub.org/hiv/> and www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/art/index.html.

Healthcare professionals are additionally encouraged to take the following steps to help reduce the rate of new diagnoses, especially in our most vulnerable communities.

- Per Louisiana 2014 Act 459, all pregnant women residing in Louisiana are to be screened for HIV at their first prenatal care visit, at their first prenatal care visit in their third trimester, and at delivery. No infant should leave the hospital without

documentation of the mother's serological status from at least one HIV test during pregnancy.

- Provide opt-out annual HIV/STI screening on all sexually active patients and more frequently (every three to six months) on patients with increased risk. Persons likely to have increased HIV risk include people who use injection drugs and their sex partners, persons who exchange sex for money or drugs, sex partners of HIV-infected persons, gay and bisexual men, and heterosexual persons who themselves or whose sex partners have had more than one sex partner since their most recent HIV test (<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm>).
- Discuss HIV prevention options such as PrEP, PEP, and U=U with all sexually active patients, regardless of age, gender, or sexual orientation.

Resources:

- Please visit [cdc.gov/hiv/clinicians/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/clinicians/index.html) for additional information on CDC recommendations and tools for preventing, diagnosing, and treating HIV and other STIs.
- Drs. Brandon Mizroch (Brandon.Mizroch@LA.gov) and Fredric McCall (Frederic.McCall@LA.gov) with the Office of Public Health are available to discuss, train, or partner on these issues upon request.