A Hub of HIV Services Post–Hurricane Harvey

Clients are now returning to the Thomas Street Health Center.

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The Thomas Street Health Center is a cornerstone of care and support for Houston's poor and underserved HIV/AIDS population. When Hurricane Harvey struck last fall, the storm shuttered the center for six days. "Even though our building didn't suffer major damage, us not being there was challenging for our patients, and they're still recovering," says Charlene Flash, MD, MPH, director of HIV prevention services for Harris Health System, which includes the Thomas Street center. Many of the clients, she explains, were already dealing with issues like unstable housing and food insecurity, so losing a safety net—even temporarily—like Thomas Street, which offers daily support groups along with medical care, was a source of anxiety, especially for someone needing meds or insulin. Clients who reached staff via social media were directed to a makeshift clinic at the NRG Convention Center or to other Harris Health clinic locations. (To read how AIDS Foundation Houston has been affected by the hurricane, click here.) Today, clients are returning, and the Thomas Street center once again offers one-stop services, including mental health assistance for those impacted by the storm.

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