



“Keep on Loving” to Prevent HIV

Philadelphia launches a free virtual PrEP program.

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Folks in Philadelphia at risk for HIV can now access both pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) at no cost, even without insurance or leaving the comfort and privacy of their own home. This month, the city launched a virtual program called Philadelphia TelePrEP to make the HIV prevention drug available to its residents.

It’s a program of the AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO) of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, which partnered with the Albert Einstein Medical Center for the initiative.

What’s more, reports Metro Philadelphia, the program aims to make PrEP prescriptions available to clients within seven days—a major improvement over the wait times people often have to endure to see a health care provider in person.

“A lot of these providers are really overwhelmed, and they don’t have the capacity to deliver PrEP services to the people who are seeking them,” says Javontae Williams, a prevention program manager with AACO. Another objective is to help retain clients in the prevention program once they begin. Many folks, Williams says, abandon PrEP after about eight or nine months.

Philadelphia TelePrEP is the “first of its kind in the region and a true opportunity to bring PrEP to people where they live,” said AACO’s director, Kathleen Brady, MD, in a press statement from the city health department.

Philadelphia TelePrEP is part of the “Philly, Keep on Loving” campaign, which provides condoms, lube, public awareness, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, including syphilis and mpox.

More than 18,000 people are living with HIV in the city, and nearly 300,000 Philadelphians are at risk of contracting HIV, estimates the Philadelphia health department, noting that about 8,200 of these individuals have already been deemed good candidates for PrEP.

In addition to offering PrEP, the telehealth program also offers PEP, a regimen of HIV meds taken after potential exposure to keep the virus from taking hold in the body. PEP must be initiated no later than 72 hours after a potential exposure. It’s hoped that a virtual program will allow people to access the antiretrovirals much faster.

Please visit PhillyKeeponLoving.com for more about TelePrEP and other campaigns, including links to sign up for PrEP and PEP.

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