



Pharmacies Take Action

The following is an edited excerpt of a blog post from HIV.gov titled “[Pharmacies Take Action to Address HIV](#)” written by Harold J. Phillips, MRP, director of the White House Office of National AIDS Policy.

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Since the release of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (the Strategy), I have been working with federal and community stakeholders to increase the low-threshold availability of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and other services throughout communities.

As part of these efforts, I have been working with several partners to expand the role of pharmacists in efforts to end HIV. Pharmacists are important partners in implementing the Strategy.

My office, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy, in conjunction with the U.S. Business Action to End HIV and the Elton John AIDS Foundation, convened leaders from across the pharmacy sector at the American Pharmacists Association headquarters in Washington, DC, to explore opportunities.

The meeting included 40 individuals from major retail pharmacies (Avita Care Solutions, CVS Health, Walgreens and Walmart), community pharmacy representatives, affiliated associations, the federal government and experts. The meeting focused on opportunities and challenges and included action planning for joint work to increase services provided in communities by pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

In June, Walmart, a founding member of the U.S. Business Action to End HIV, opened 70 specialty HIV pharmacies in Colorado, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia and Florida. By the end of 2023, Walmart will have more than 80 HIV Specialty Pharmacies of the Community in 11 states. These pharmacies, operating within the traditional pharmacy setting, are staffed with a team of HIV-trained pharmacists, technicians and community health workers.

On World AIDS Day 2022, Walmart announced, in conjunction with the Elton John AIDS Foundation, a nationwide training HIV Prevention + Treatment continuing education program available to all Walmart pharmacies and Walmart health team members.

On June 27, National HIV Testing Day, Walgreens teamed up with Greater Than HIV, health departments and community organizations for its annual event providing free HIV testing and

counseling at more than 400 locations. Counselors were available to answer questions about HIV prevention and treatment options and provide referrals to PrEP. Since the partnership began in 2011, more than 76,000 free HIV tests have been provided, including over 15,000 self-tests. Additionally, more than 3,000 Walgreens pharmacists have received specialized training.

Also in June, the Human Rights Campaign announced a nationwide self-testing initiative supported by CVS Health. The initiative, Wellness in Action, will distribute 3,000 self-testing kits to community-based partners focused on reaching those in communities disproportionately impacted by HIV. Community partners working on this initiative include Arianna's Center (Fort Lauderdale, Florida), TruEvolution (Riverside, California), Abounding Prosperity (Dallas), Thrive SS (Atlanta) and Chicago Black Gay Men's Caucus (Chicago). Select CVS MinuteClinics in those locations will also work with an individual's health plan to provide access to additional follow-up services.

The Strategy emphasizes the role of pharmacies in increasing access to a variety of HIV prevention and care services, such as testing, PrEP education and initiation, medication education and adherence counseling, as well as in reengaging patients who have fallen out of care.

The U.S. Business Action to End HIV launched on World AIDS Day last year and has continued to engage corporations in accelerating public-private partnerships to end HIV. I am confident that the actions taken, and the future commitments by these partners and others, will lead us further toward reaching our collective goal to ending HIV in the United States.