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Heart of Ohio Family Health Adds New PrEP Program To Lower HIV Rates in Columbus

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Heart of Ohio Family Health (HOFHC) is excited to announce they are adding the HIV PrEP program to address the growing human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) rates in Franklin County.

PrEP, also known as pre-exposure prophylaxis, is a prevention strategy that can reduce the chances of getting HIV. HOFHC is located in Franklin County, which is one of the 48 counties that have been greatly impacted by the HIV epidemic.

"PrEP is considered the biggest medical breakthrough in HIV prevention in the last 30 years," HOFHC Chief Medical Officer Dr. William Washington said, "We can end HIV, but only if we make these services available to everyone."

Most new HIV cases are transmitted by the undiagnosed or untreated. It is estimated that over a million people are living with HIV in the United States and that 165,000 don't know they have the virus. The CDC recommends that everyone in the country between the ages of 13-64 gets tested for HIV at least once and that people at increased risk get tested more frequently.

In 2018, HOFHC tested 1002 patients for HIV which resulted in 14 testing positive. At that time, the clinic was only able to test pregnant women, though now, with the PrEP program, they will be using the "opt out" procedure, meaning all new patients will be tested for HIV unless they opt out.

Washington and many other providers, including Clinical Pharmacist Anna Staudt who organized and systemized the HIV PrEP service, are well prepared to start the PrEP program with their patients.

"I'm excited to directly impact patients through assisting in creating our PrEP program and coordinating educational programs for our providers," Staudt replied, "I will also be collaborating with the providers at HOFHC to see PrEP patients and assist in their care."



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After teaching HIV at a school of pharmacy for two years, Staudt will be bringing her expertise to provide the best care for all HIV PrEP patients.

“Through this new service, we can make a huge impact on the community by reducing the rate of new HIV cases by offering medication for prevention,” Staudt said.

Questions regarding sexual health will be asked; if a patient is at high risk of HIV, their provider will schedule a 30 minute PrEP session for follow up. HOFHC’s PrEP program is available to uninsured, insured and Medicaid patients, and a sliding fee discount is available to all patients who qualify. Additionally, 340B is available for all patients to help with HIV medication costs.

To read all of Heart of Ohio Family Health COVID-19 news updates, visit <https://heartofohiofamilyhealth.org/our-community/covid-19-updates>

To learn more about Heart of Ohio Family Health, visit www.heartofohiofamilyhealth.org.

About Heart of Ohio Family Health

Heart of Ohio Family Health (HOFHC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit health care provider committed to serving all groups, ethnicities, and communities in Central Ohio since 2003. Operating as a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), we offer services in primary care, pediatrics, behavioral health, substance use disorder, OBGYN, diagnostic laboratory, pharmacy, dietetics & nutrition, and interpretation.

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