



Dear Community Partners,

World AIDS Day, celebrated on December 1st, is an opportunity to reflect, mourn, and hope for the future together in community. Every day and especially today, we grieve the lives lost and hold space for those struggling in the midst of their HIV or AIDS diagnosis. Simultaneously, we must consider the hope and progress we have seen in the 35 years since this annual event's inception.

Per the United States Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), this year's theme is "World AIDS Day 35: Remember and Commit", with focuses on the global struggle against HIV-related stigma, recognition of those lost, and support for the ongoing community-driven work to prevent and find a cure for HIV.

Communities impacted by HIV have always been essential to enacting necessary change; their activism not only raised awareness of the heartbreaking death toll of AIDS, but also directly resulted in greater acknowledgement of HIV by leading US governmental figures increasing research and healthcare funding. The first World AIDS day was in 1988, the result of years of community activism by those living with and impacted by HIV. Two years later, the Ryan White CARE Act was enacted; utilizing earlier community-driven AIDS service work and knowledge to create a framework and national network of programs to address varied HIV care needs.

These courageous and loving acts of community are felt in and among every person living with, affected by, or benefitting from HIV prevention; with the hard-fought efforts of their community members leaving lasting impacts. When the first World AIDS Day was celebrated, patients diagnosed with AIDS were often given months to a year to live. Today, with therapies developed and fights led by community activists for decades, people living with HIV can live long and healthy lives.

Within the Washington State community, there are approximately 14,000 people living with HIV. Fifty-six percent of new infections are in men who have sex with men (MSM), 49% Caucasian, 18% Black and 20% Hispanic across gender and risk factor. King and Pierce County represent the counties with the greatest number of people living with HIV in WA State; however, Pierce County has fallen behind King County in a number of important metrics. In 2021, 15% of new infections in the state occurred in Pierce County, compared to 45% in King Co, representing the second largest HIV incidence in the state. In Pierce County, 20% of new infections are late diagnoses (defined as an AIDS diagnosis within 12 months of HIV diagnosis). Following their diagnosis, only 69% of Pierce County patients were linked to care within 30 days, compared to 82% in King County. Within Pierce County 83% of prevalent cases were engaged in care, with 75% suppressed on antiretroviral medications, 7% less than King County.

These statistics paint a clear picture of ongoing needs within Pierce County and emphasize the important work to be done by organizations working with people at risk for and living with HIV. As a community, we have work to do to bring HIV prevention messaging to fellow Pierce County residents to prevent new infections in our county.

The Pierce County HIV Collaborative gathers regularly to unite in our efforts for testing, diagnosis, linkage to HIV prevention or HIV treatment, with an ultimate goal of viral load suppression. By partnering together and elevating those most impacted by HIV, we can unite to stop new infections and ensure people living with HIV have timely and appropriate care.

At Community Health Care, we have served as a safety net in health for Pierce County for over five decades. Our HIV program provides comprehensive prevention and treatment services for those at risk for or living with HIV. We welcome people in their health journeys and continue to believe that when we are united with community in our efforts, health outcomes improve and people are empowered.

Today and everyday, we remember those community members we have lost and continue to commit to Community Health Care's organizational mission: "to provide the highest quality health care with compassionate and accessible service for all". We are proud to stand arm in arm with people impacted by HIV and to provide incredible and necessary care in our community.

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PIERCE COUNTY
HIV COLLABORATIVE