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**40-Year Anniversary of the First Reported Cases of HIV/AIDS and Reaffirmation of
LA County's Commitment to End the HIV Epidemic.**

By Mario J. Pérez, MPH, Director of the Division of HIV and STD Programs

June 5, 2021 marks a day to express our continued support for the 57,700 Los Angeles County residents living with HIV and to encourage all County Departments and County residents to join Public Health in our commitment to end the epidemic.

Forty years ago, on June 5, 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued its first ever report about a rare form of pneumonia among a small group of young gay men in Los Angeles – years later this pneumonia would be confirmed as being AIDS-related. Since 1981, nearly 100,000 residents of Los Angeles County have been diagnosed with HIV and over 38,000 have succumbed to the effects of this viral infection. Over the past 40 years, the HIV epidemic has amplified socio-economic, racial, sexual orientation, and gender-related inequities that stubbornly persist. Today, HIV disproportionately impacts the lives of men of all ages and all racial/ethnic groups (most notably young African American, American Indian/Alaska Native and Latinx men), men who have sex with men, as well as transgender persons across all age and racial/ethnic groups, African American and Latinx women, people with substance use disorder, and people experiencing homeless. Each day, the County of Los Angeles invests with, and supports, a network of community-based and County-based service providers to prevent, treat, and control the spread of HIV, using epidemiological surveillance, evidence-based programs, and policies that promote health.

In 2019, in full alignment with the national initiative, *Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America*, the County launched a plan for Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) – a bold whole-of-society initiative among local, state and national partners, designed to reduce the number of new HIV transmissions and acquisitions in Los Angeles County by 75 percent by 2025 and by 90 percent by 2030. The EHE effort focuses on four key pillars: (1) Diagnose people as early as possible, (2) Treat people rapidly and effectively, (3) Prevent new HIV transmissions, and (4) Respond quickly to HIV outbreaks. On June 5, 2021, amid the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the health, economic, and social fabric our communities, we are reminded of the fragile nature of our lives, the impact of unabated viral infections, and the complex set of issues that impact the public's health.

As we reflect on 40 years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we invite all County residents to support and promote HIV prevention and treatment strategies including early HIV testing, biomedical HIV prevention, and consistent engagement in life saving HIV care. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors has [proclaimed](#) June 5, 2021 as a day to reflect on the 38,000 lives claimed by HIV/AIDS in Los Angeles County over the last 40 years; a day to honor and support the 57,700 Los Angeles County residents living with HIV; and a day to encourage all County Departments, elected officials, community-based partners and residents to join us as we strive to End the HIV Epidemic by 2030 as we now have the right data, the right tools, and the right leaders.

To learn more about the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Division of HIV and STD Programs' plan to end the HIV epidemic in Los Angeles County, please visit <https://www.lacounty.hiv/>.