



Aug. 1, 2023

Dear Colleague:

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is pleased to announce our 4th annual SC PrEP Awareness Week, **Sept. 25- Sept. 29, 2023**. This is a statewide campaign to increase HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) awareness, access and uptake in South Carolina.

We invite medical providers, pharmacists, nurses, social workers, health educators and college students to join the daily webinars hosted by the South Carolina HIV/AIDS Clinical Training Center, a partner of the Southeast AIDS Training and Education Center (SE AETC), to learn more about PrEP. Participants can earn up to **five FREE** continuing medical, nursing, social work or pharmacy education credits.

Amid surging syphilis rates and the mpox outbreak, HIV remains a significant health concern, especially in the Southern states, which account for approximately 50% of new HIV infections. It has been 10 years since the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval of PrEP; unfortunately, PrEP services remain underutilized in Southern states. Through coordination of multi-faceted efforts and collaborations, this can change. South Carolina and other Southern states have a greater PrEP-to-need ratio. The PrEP-to-need ratio is calculated by comparing newly diagnosed HIV infections with current PrEP prescriptions. Increasing PrEP uptake is a critical HIV prevention intervention.

Our goals include increasing awareness and providers' knowledge about PrEP and gaining support from many disciplines to increase PrEP uptake statewide. This year's activities and testing events will focus on primary care providers and college health centers across South Carolina. Studies have shown college and university health centers often do not prescribe PrEP or offer PrEP referrals because they are unfamiliar with PrEP. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2021 people aged 18-22 made up 21% of all new HIV diagnoses. Increased PrEP awareness on college campuses could have a significant impact in protecting young adults from HIV infection and ending the HIV epidemic.

Please visit these links to learn more about PrEP week, PrEP resources and how you can get involved:

- [PrEP Awareness Week](#)
- [PrEP Awareness Week Brochure](#)
- [PrEP Provider Toolkit](#)
- [scdhec.gov/PrEP](http://scdhec.gov/PrEP)

Please share this information widely. If you have questions or concerns, please email us at [PrEPMeSC@dhec.sc.gov](mailto:PrEPMeSC@dhec.sc.gov).

Sincerely,

Linda J. Bell, MD

State Epidemiologist

Director, Bureau of Communicable Disease Prevention and Control

S.C. Dept. of Health & Environmental Control