

Baton Rouge Welcomes New HIV Specialty Care Clinic

AIDS Healthcare Foundation opened a clinic in Baton Rouge, Louisiana—one of the five U.S. cities with the highest rate of new HIV diagnoses.

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To expand access to [HIV](#) prevention and care in Louisiana, [AIDS Healthcare Foundation](#) (AHF) opened an AHF Health Center in Baton Rouge, according to [WAFB News](#).

In 2022, [Louisiana](#) ranked fourth in the country for the rate of new HIV diagnoses (18.6 per 100,000 population) and 12th in the estimated number of overall new HIV diagnoses, according to recent data from the [Louisiana Department of Health](#). What's more, Black people in the state experience disproportionate rates; in 2023, they accounted for 68% of new HIV cases.

In 2023, there were 875 new HIV diagnoses statewide. Of those, 133 were in East Baton Rouge Parish, which landed it in the top five cities nationwide in terms of new HIV diagnoses.

In Baton Rouge and its surrounding cities, many people face barriers to timely and effective HIV care due to [low income](#), [food insecurity](#) and lack of [housing](#) and transportation, according to AHF mobilizer and advocacy consultant Sashika Baunchand.

The new AHF Health Center aims to broaden [access to HIV services](#) to those most at risk in Baton Rouge.

The HIV specialty clinic will offer primary care services from HIV specialists, including HIV and sexually transmitted infection screenings, pre-exposure prophylaxis ([PrEP](#)) services, HIV treatment and more. It will also feature wellness days for people 14 years or older to get tested and treated for HIV regardless of their ability to pay.

Erika Forbes, a family nurse practitioner, will be the lead provider at the clinic. Forbes told WAFB

that eliminating barriers to HIV care is vital to reducing the rate of new diagnoses and lowering the risk of other HIV-related conditions. (You can watch the WAFB news segment at the top of this article [and on YouTube](#)).

“HIV is a disease of the entire body,” Forbes said. “It attacks your immune system, but it affects the gut, your mental health—it affects everything, so if you don’t take care of the primary disease, then all those other processes can take effect on the body.”

According to Forbes, the number of people in the Baton Rouge area seeking HIV care has nearly doubled over the last five years. She hopes the new clinic will encourage at-risk individuals to access care without stigma or fear of judgment.

“We want to get as many people in care so that we don’t have as many new patients coming in,” Forbes said. “We want to decrease the stigma, decrease the diagnosis rate and increase the treatment rate. We also do PrEP services so we can prevent the spread of HIV.”

The [clinic is located](#) at 8425 Cumberland Place in Baton Rouge. It’s open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.