Vivent Health Merges With Thrive to Bring HIV Care to Kansas City

Vivent will create an HIV Medical Home in Kansas City, Missouri, where Latinos and Black Americans see higher HIV rates.

May 4, 2021 By Trent Straube

Vivent Health, an HIV care provider, has merged with Thrive Health Connection to expand into Kansas City, Missouri. Vivent provides integrated services that range from prevention, testing and treatment to mental health services and pharmacies to those living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS.

“The merger and the creation of the first HIV Medical Home in Kansas City will assure we rise up to this moment in relentless pursuit of a world without AIDS,” said Vivent Health president and CEO Michael J. Gifford in a Vivent press release. “We are at a remarkable moment in the fight to end the HIV epidemic. Every tool we need, save a vaccine, is available to us. Together we can achieve our collective goal to rid the world of AIDS. The question before us is simple: Will we do just that?”

Caroline Huffman, the CEO at Thrive Health Connection, will remain at the newly merged company and serve as the Vivent Health vice president of operations.

“We are excited to bring the [Vivent] HIV Medical Home model of care to the Kansas City community so the individuals we serve can thrive,” Huffman said in the press release. “We’re looking forward to increasing our current programs and services in the months to come, which will allow us to stay committed to the health and well-being of anyone impacted by HIV/AIDS in Kansas City well into the future.”

It’s important to make choices that keep you healthy! ✔ Take your #HIV medicine. ✔ Keep your appointments. ✔ Talk...

Posted by Vivent Health on Friday, April 30, 2021

Vivent's HIV Medical Home is a patient-centered model that offers integrated services, ranging from pharmacies, social services and case management to dental, mental health and medical care as well ass HIV treatment, testing and prevention, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), the daily pill HIV-negative people can take to effectively reduce their risk of contracting the virus.

Vivent Health was formerly known as the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin. It launched the new name in January 2019 as it expanded into Colorado and Missouri through mergers with Rocky Mountain CARES in Denver and St. Louis Effort for AIDS. It now operates 17 locations in Colorado, Missouri, Texas and Wisconsin.

Regarding the HIV community it will serve in its new home of Kansas City, Missouri, Vivent Health writes:

> In recent years, Kansas City has seen an increase in the demand for services for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. There are approximately 4,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in Kansas City and an estimated 150 new HIV cases reported annually, according to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. In Kansas City, people of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, are disproportionately affected and have some of the highest infection rates. At the end of 2018, the rate of new HIV diagnoses among Blacks/African Americans was 4.6 times as high as the rate among whites, and 2.1 times as high among Latinx individuals compared to whites.

There is a high need for increased PrEP services, which is one of the most powerful HIV prevention tools available. PrEP is a one-pill, once-a-day medication that is more than 90% effective at reducing the risk of contracting HIV via sexual activity. A number of significant societal, institutional and financial barriers need to be overcome to increase the number of people who access PrEP. The Vivent Health HIV Medical Home model is equipped to provide comprehensive care that helps Missourians live long, healthy lives.

In February of this year—Black History Month—Vivent's CEO Mike Gifford addressed racial disparities in HIV, penning an opinion piece in POZ titled "A Time for Action."

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In related news, in the May 16 multicity virtual AIDS Walk, Vivent Health is the prime beneficiary of fundraising efforts in Austin and Milwaukee. To learn more, including how to tune in to watch the festivities, see "Six Cities Join Blockbuster Virtual Fundraiser 'AIDS Walk: Live at Home.'"

Last week, April 29, Vivent held its annual Dining Out For Life fundraiser in St. Louis. Because restaurants have been hard hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, Vivent didn't ask for 25% of sales from participating restaurants that day. Instead, Vivent asked folks to dine in or order out as a way to support the eateries and pay it forward for their previous support (and to separately donate to

Vivent's HIV causes). In St. Louis, the event has raised over $4 million in the past 27 years.

Dining Out For Life takes places on different days in cities across the nation. For more details see the POZ article "Dig In! This Week You Can Dine Out to End HIV."

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