



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Legacy Community Health Sees Nearly 60% Rise in Applications for HIV/AIDS Medication Program during COVID**

*Temporary Changes in State Requirements Help Patients Get Extra Month of Medications*

HOUSTON (June 5, 2020) – Since mid-March when statewide restrictions were put in place to flatten the number of COVID-19 cases, [Legacy Community Health](#) Financial Services has seen a 58.5% increase from the average number of completed applications for the [Texas HIV Medication Program](#), the state-funded AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). Legacy Community Health’s pharmacy in Montrose has also seen a 50% increase in the average number of HIV-positive patients filling their prescriptions through ADAP, potentially due to the increase in uninsured people living with HIV and because of changes in the program requirements due to COVID-19.

“We are able to get more and keep more patients in the program right now because of changes in the requirements during COVID. These numbers mean more people are seeking help in getting their HIV or AIDS medications right now,” said Ruston Taylor, senior director of pharmacy clinical services and outreach at Legacy. “These changes are critically important to ENDING the HIV epidemic as the more patients we have on HIV regimens that have HIV undetectable viral loads, the greater chance we have of decreasing new HIV diagnosis being transmitted during sex.”

THMP provides medications for the treatment of HIV and its related complications for low-income Texans. To qualify for medications, potential clients who meet eligibility criteria complete an application for assistance. Once approved, a client receives medications at an assigned pharmacy in their community. In order for patients to remain active in the THMP program and get their medications, they have to recertify their eligibility at least every six months after receiving approval. Patients losing program coverage are required to complete the full application again, requiring numerous pieces of documentation which is problematic for many patients to obtain.

However, COVID-19 has temporarily changed the requirements of patients requiring HIV medications through the THMP program. During this time, THMP is sending out an extra month of medication for many medications that were previously only filled for 30 days. For HIV-positive Texans who have lost health insurance coverage, there is now the ability to complete

an emergency application for medication assistance over the phone with very minimal supporting documents required. Currently this change has resulted in an increase of persons living with HIV to be able to participate in this important program.

There are several important considerations in the appropriate treatment of people living with HIV, including:

- HIV regimens are now very effective, and start to work as soon as the patient starts the therapy
- The longer a person living with HIV consistently receives their treatment regimens, the greater chance the patient has of achieving an “undetectable” HIV viral load (meaning HIV could not be detected by available technology)
- Data now demonstrates that people living with HIV who have undetectable viral loads have no chance of transmitting HIV to another person through sexual contact, reflected in the [U=U campaign](#), standing for “Undetectable equals Untransmittable”
- Decreasing the rates of HIV transmission is one way to reach the goals of the [ENDING the HIV Epidemic](#) campaign.

With National HIV Testing Day on June 27, Legacy is continuing to offer free rapid HIV testing at all clinics ([see locations here](#)) as well as [same-day PrEP](#) available at Legacy Montrose, Fifth Ward, Midtown Main and Central Beaumont clinics. Walk-ins are welcome, or to set up an appointment call **(713) 814-3300**. Health providers who speak Spanish or other languages are available.

Legacy also continues to offer adult and pediatric primary care and sick visits, OB/GYN services, free STD and pregnancy testing, and virtual social services, health education, and behavioral health services for adults and children. Clinic locations and their hours of operation are always updated at [www.legacycommunityhealth.org](http://www.legacycommunityhealth.org).

Legacy accepts most HMOs/PPOs, Medicaid, Medicare and CHIP plans. Legacy also utilizes a sliding scale fee to lower the cost of services for uninsured patients.

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### **About Legacy Community Health**

Legacy Community Health (Legacy) is a full-service network of community medical clinics offering primary and specialty care to in the Texas Gulf Coast region. Services include adult primary care, pediatrics, dental care, vision services, behavioral health services, OB/GYN and maternity, vaccinations and immunizations, health promotion and community outreach, wellness and nutrition, and comprehensive HIV/AIDS care. With 35 locations across Houston, Baytown, Deer Park, and Beaumont, Legacy is the largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Texas. Legacy has been a United Way-affiliated agency since 1990. To learn more, visit [www.legacycommunityhealth.org](http://www.legacycommunityhealth.org).