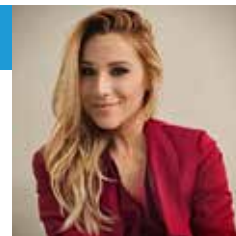


The Florida Nurses' Role in Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Vision for 2030

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With just five years left to meet the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "Ending the HIV Epidemic" 2030 goals, the role of nursing has never been more critical. Nurses stand at the forefront of this historic battle, poised to lead the charge in shaping a future free from an epidemic that has left a permanent mark on generations. Their dedication, skill, and compassion highlight them as pivotal players in this transformative journey.

Florida nurses are uniquely positioned to make a profound impact in the fight against HIV. As front-line healthcare providers, educators, and advocates, they are often the first point of contact for individuals at risk. For those living with HIV, nurses serve as trusted guides, offering not only medical expertise but also emotional support. Their deep understanding of culturally competent care, unwavering commitment to advocacy, and willingness to adopt innovative prevention and treatment strategies make them indispensable. By addressing the complex barriers that hinder progress—whether social, medical, or systemic—nurses in Florida are reshaping health outcomes and advancing equity in some of the most vulnerable communities.

Florida, unfortunately, remains a hotspot for new HIV cases, with some of the highest numbers in the nation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2024). This reality underscores the urgency of tackling the challenges unique to this region. With a diverse population and persistent disparities in healthcare access, Florida represents both the epicenter of the problem and a beacon of opportunity for meaningful change.

Non-profit and for-profit organizations, hospitals, research entities, and more are stepping up to meet these challenges with innovative strategies that place nursing at the heart of HIV care and prevention efforts. One example is CAN Community Health, headquartered in Florida, which has recognized the necessity of shifting operations to meet evolving demands. By amplifying the presence of nurses in communities and fostering hands-on collaboration with HIV prevention teams, they are closing gaps in care that have long been overlooked. This unified approach ensures that resources reach those who need them most, empowering both individuals and communities to move closer to the shared goal of ending the epidemic.

At the same time, nurses are breaking

traditional boundaries by working at their highest scope of practice. They are stepping into roles that have historically been physician-led, spearheading initiatives in underserved communities, and gaining access to decision-making tables where policies and programs are shaped. As the largest healthcare workforce globally, registered nurses have a unique capacity to influence health outcomes on a large scale. Their ability to provide culturally sensitive care, advocate for equitable access, and develop innovative solutions positions them as key agents of change. Empowering nurses to take on these roles not only elevates the profession but also lays the foundation for global health advancements capable of reshaping history.

The path to ending the HIV epidemic is not without its challenges, but with nurses leading the way, there is hope. Their resilience, expertise, and compassion are driving the collaborative efforts needed to overcome obstacles and create a future free from HIV. Together, through bold leadership and community-centered care, we can achieve a healthier and brighter tomorrow. ■

References

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Gabby Brito, is a dedicated healthcare leader with a strong background in nursing and HIV care. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, she holds bachelor's degrees in molecular biology and nursing from Antillean Adventist University. While serving in the U.S. Navy, she volunteered at a migrant clinic in South Carolina, which inspired her passion for working in the HIV field.

Gabby has worked with several Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and currently serves as the Director of Nursing Workforce at CAN Community Health, a non-profit organization focused on HIV. In this role, she combines her passion for nursing leadership with her commitment to improving care for underserved communities. Gabby earned her Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) from Keiser University and her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) from Aspen University. She is deeply committed to advancing nursing leadership and strengthening the role of nurses in transforming HIV care.

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