

## Health Brigade has a robust HIV Testing and Prevention Program.

We rarely hear about people dying from HIV/AIDS anymore. In fact, many people believe the HIV epidemic is over and no longer a threat to sexual health. This is a misconception.

Due to advancements in treatment more people are living longer with the sexually transmitted virus. However, there are approximately 1.2 million

people in the United States living with HIV, almost 25,000 in Virginia alone.

In 2020, Southern states accounted for 51% of new HIV diagnoses, despite making up just 38% of the overall U.S. population.

Stigma and discrimination are intense in the South, especially in our Black and Brown communities where people are disproportionately affected.

**Why us?** We are committed to

servicing the most marginalized populations in the community—not only those with few resources, but also those most oppressed and stigmatized.

**Testing in the community** is one of the agency's greatest points of entry for other services. And it takes a brigade of committed individuals willing to meet people where they are. From a blood draw in the field to the coordination of care in the clinic, there are phlebotomists, other trained testers, medication

coordinators, substance use harm reduction team members and physicians who are involved.

**In FY 2024**, we completed 984 HIV tests across the metro Richmond area. We successfully linked 12 new HIV patients to care and 121 individuals

to our own PrEP Program (PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis, which is a medicine that helps prevent HIV infection).

Health Brigade has also

enhanced its hepatitis C (HCV) testing because people living with HIV are at a higher risk for contracting it. HCV is a disease that affects the liver. In FY 2024, we conducted 229 tests, with 60 identified as having been exposed. We linked 12 patients to treatment in our own clinic.

**"The majority of clients** who have seen us for Hepatitis C treatment have also elected to continue with Health Brigade for their primary care," says Dr. Rachel Waller, medical director.

**The testing effort has been deeply affected by cuts** in the Virginia Department of Health Community Testing grants. This vital public health program is at risk of closing and Health Brigade is charged with finding other sources for funding and sustainability.

"Ever the advocate though, Health Brigade is doing whatever it can to combat the cuts as well as diversify our funding

sources," says Darius Pryor, HIV Testing and Prevention Program manager.

**The integration of our programs is important** "because they educate, inform, and empower patients to consider

their sexual health, and in turn, their overall health in ways many had not considered them before," says Pryor.

"I have seen moments when we really reach someone, when the message clicks for them and their perspective

broadens."

**Test results can really change a person's life.** "We provide clients with the tools and knowledge to change how they engage sexually and make informed decisions to better their health outcomes overall," says Pryor.

## Health Brigade's Mental Health & Wellness

**Department** was on a mission to fight mental health stigma this year. Through a grant from the Virginia Association of Free and Charitable Clinics, the agency launched a multimedia campaign.

**"To be true to Health Brigade's mission**, we must address the continued stigma around mental health that may keep potential clients from talking about, exploring, and addressing their thoughts and feelings. Taking the stigma out of mental health and making our services known to the public was paramount in this campaign," said Muriel Azria-Evans, PhD, director of the department.

**Stigma often comes from lack of understanding or fear.** While many people may accept the medical or genetic nature of a mental health disorder and the

need for treatment, many still have a negative view of those with mental illness. The more we talk about mental health and highlight the available services, the more we destigmatize a universal aspect of the human condition.

According to campaign results:

- **888,105** animated/video ads were behaviorally targeted to potential patients based on their online search history and geography;
- **2,245** leads were driven to HB's website from all of the strategies utilized;
- **216** commercials were aired on NBC12, CW, Bounce and Me-TV;
- **78.9%** of Central Virginia households were reached more than 3.3 times!



## Our Mission

The mission of Health Brigade is to provide exceptional health services to those least served in a caring and non-judgmental environment.

## Our Values

Welcoming • Trusted • Inclusive  
Integrated • Impactful • Responsive

## Our Cover

*It takes a brigade to offer comprehensive, integrated care for our patients and clients. Pictured on our cover are representatives of three teams from the Medical Clinic, Comprehensive Harm Reduction and HIV Testing and Prevention Program who, together, deliver HIV/HepC testing services.*

*L to R standing: Aicha Konate, Dr. Rachel Waller, Ernest Charles, Edward Lee, Colin King, Dziko Singleton, Sasha Poggil. L to R seated: Carolina De Paz, Darius Pryor*

*(See online staff list for position titles)*

Photo by Patience Salgado

## Our Lists

The following lists can be found on our website at [www.healthbrigade.org/2024AnnualReport](http://www.healthbrigade.org/2024AnnualReport)

- Board of Directors List
- Annual Fund Donor List
- Staff List
- Volunteer List



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1010 N. Thompson Street / Richmond, Virginia 23230  
804-358-6343 / [healthbrigade.org](http://healthbrigade.org)



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