

At HBCU Alabama State, Homecoming Highlighted HIV Awareness

Alabama State University and ViiV Healthcare partnered to address the disproportionate impact of HIV in Black communities.

October 10, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

To combat [HIV](#) disparities and promote [awareness](#) among students at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Alabama State University partnered with [ViiV Healthcare](#) to bring HIV education directly to campus throughout its homecoming weekend.

“The reason we haven’t ended the epidemic is because of health disparities,” Bithiah Lafontant, ViiV’s director of corporate communications, [told ESSENCE](#). “There are some communities that are benefiting more than others. So what we’re focusing on is making sure that everyone benefits equally with what we’re doing at ViiV Healthcare.”

ViiV reps share HIV prevention and testing information with the community at Alabama State University's Homecoming weekend, Oct. 4-5, 2024 in Montgomery. Courtesy of ViiV Healthcare

Black people in the United States have long been disproportionately affected by HIV. In fact, Black folks accounted for about 38% of the 37,981 new HIV diagnoses among people ages 13 and older in 2022, despite making up only about 12% of the U.S. population, according to [HIV.gov](#).

What's more, HIV diagnoses are not equal across states and regions. Indeed, the South—where most HBCUs are located—accounted for both the majority of Black people newly diagnosed with HIV and the majority of people living with HIV at the end of 2022, [according to KFF News](#).

While diagnoses among Black Americans decreased by 5% between 2018 and 2022, disparities persist, especially on HBCU campuses.

ViiV set up activation sites throughout the Alabama State campus to offer [HIV education](#) and [testing](#) (through a partnership with Five Horizons Health Centers) to students, administration, faculty and all other attendees. ASU and ViiV aimed to address misconceptions about HIV and promote awareness of HIV prevention methods, such as [pre-exposure prophylaxis](#) (PrEP).

ViiV reps shared HIV testing and prevention information during Alabama State University's Homecoming weekend October 4-5, 2024, in Montgomery. Courtesy of ViiV Healthcare

"HIV prevention options have evolved substantially, with PrEP now available as a long-acting injectable option or daily oral pills," Lafontant said. "We believe people need to be informed about their options so they can make the choice that best fits their life. Only by working together will we tackle HIV and end the HIV epidemic for all."

ViiV also organized activities throughout ASU's homecoming weekend, including tailgating events that featured face painting, giveaways and concerts.

ViiV Healthcare presented the Sting Stage, with musical performances and a special message from the mayor, during Alabama State University's Homecoming weekend October 4-5, 2024, in Montgomery. [Courtesy of ViiV Healthcare](#)

ASU and ViiV hope that initiating a dialogue about HIV awareness and education on HBCU campuses will encourage folks to feel more comfortable discussing the topic and seeking out resources and care.

"Our successful partnership with ASU reflects ViiV Healthcare's deep commitment to HBCUs—rooted in culturally informed programming that prioritizes linkage to care, education, and prevention services," Aftan Dyson, PharmD, regional medical lead and diversity, equity and inclusion medical engagement lead at ViiV Healthcare, told POZ. "By bringing vital HIV prevention messaging and resources directly to the heart of the ASU experience, we've not only sparked important conversations but also facilitated lasting connections to care that will continue beyond homecoming."

To read more click [#HIV Awareness](#) or [#Students](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[PrEP Peer Educators Help Prevent HIV on Black Campuses](#)," "[Philly High Schoolers Work on Published HIV Research](#)" and "[Black Queer AF Media Tour to Bring Culture and HIV Awareness Across the South](#)."