

# Health Care with Heart: Southern Nevada Health District Expands Community Access with Church Based STI Clinic

## STD Prevention **SUCCESS STORIES**



A growing number of sexually transmitted infection (STI) treatment and prevention programs around the country are embracing a strategy of “human-centered care”—health care focused on patients’ unique needs and priorities—in a number of ways to counter [rising STI rates](#): [from building capacity](#) while also [expanding partnerships](#), to [giving patients more autonomy in the STI screening and treatment process](#). For the [Southern Nevada Health District \(SNHD\)](#) in Las Vegas, leaning into this more intuitive method of STI health care includes offering STI treatment and prevention services in a welcoming, but unexpected location—a local church.

### Why a church?

Early challenges can sometimes lead to positive change. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, SNHD, a primary location for vaccinations, sought additional space to expand vaccine access for surrounding communities. When the opportunity arose to use vacant space in All Saints Episcopal Church nearby, “we all jumped at it,” said Lourdes Yapjoco, Chief Administrative Nurse for SNHD. “We were bursting at the seams in the main district building, so the church proved to be a welcome expansion option for us. And the non-traditional setting offered a way to help break barriers and overcome stigmas associated with STI health care.”

The services provided by All Saints Sexual Health Clinic are an extension of those at the main SNHD campus – full service STI health care – in a convenient, more private location.

“Patients really enjoy coming here,” said Stephanie Romano, Advance Practice Registered Nurse with SNHD. “For some, they may initially have concerns about what to expect from a sexual health clinic within the church.

When patients arrive, they see the common area is full of flowers and in a non-enclosed area. The waiting area is not filled with as many patients as the main campus, so they like the privacy aspect of it.

Overall, the process here is more streamlined, and patients enjoy that – when they come here, they leave with a new perception of what an STI clinic can be.”

### The anatomy of modern, responsive health care

“We provide initial visits as well as the option of follow up appointments for patients who first seek care at the main SNHD campus. We’re happy we can deliver care at an additional site that also helps patients feel comfortable and more at ease,” said Yapjoco.

**83% of  
All Saints clinic  
patients  
are male**

**Nearly half  
(45%)  
are Hispanic/  
Latino**

**All Saints  
patient visits  
average  
115 per  
month**



**Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention**  
National Center for HIV/AIDS,  
Viral Hepatitis, STD, and  
TB Prevention

At All Saints, patients can access a full spectrum of STI health care, including:

- Provider visits for screening and on-site treatment of STIs,
- Express testing,
- PrEP and nPEP clinics (HIV pre-exposure and non-occupational post-exposure prophylaxis),
- Lab draws (including STI panel), tests of cure, and point-of-care Rapid HIV tests,
- Telehealth services,
- Sexual health education and condoms,
- Referral for comprehensive services, and
- Partner services through collaboration with SNHD's Office of Disease Surveillance.

“These are all benefits that we initially scaled up at our main SNHD campus over the years, so patients who visit our church clinic get the advantage of a proven track record of results-driven STI health care with the added perk of a low-pressure, calming environment,” said Romano.

Both locations serve a predominantly minority, mostly low-income community (nearly half are Hispanic/Latino), so STI health care delivered with accessibility in mind is a key driver in the services SNHD provides. “Staying connected to the needs of the surrounding community is vital – we aim to be a reliable, impactful support system, and as we look towards the future, we will build on this even more with an expansion of our psychosocial support services to include meals, shower facilities, and mental health services,” said Yapjoco.

## In service to the community

Ultimately, says Father Rafael Pereira, the Priest in Charge of All Saints Episcopal Church, service is at the heart of all outreach delivered by both the church and the clinic, so combining the two made perfect sense. “Our mission as a Church and as Christians

is to serve our community and to support them with the services they need most. STIs continue to spread at an alarming rate in Las Vegas and we were elated to partner with SNHD by providing our safe campus for STI services. This partnership allows us to support all in need, but especially our underserved minority and uninsured populations.”

An unlikely partnership making a difference: focusing on STI health care from the client's perspective with a unique, personable approach, lighting the way for a harvest of positive community impacts.

***“I have been a patient in the PrEP program at SNHD for four years now and highly recommend the program to anyone with concerns about their sexual health and/or HIV prevention. The first 3 years I visited the main center, and while services were helpful, it was always very busy and wait times were pretty long. This past year, the PrEP program relocated to the church. Since relocation, services have been 100% more personal, easier, and wait times have been cut in half.”***

— Ashley R, SNHD client

[Southern Nevada Health District](#)

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