



**AIDSAlabama**  
SOUTH

**AIDS Alabama South**

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**Press Release:**

For Immediate Release September 25, 2019

**AIDS ALABAMA SOUTH RECEIVES POSITIVE ACTION FOR YOUTH GRANT FROM  
VIIV HEALTHCARE TO LAUNCH A NEW YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

Mobile, Alabama – AIDS Alabama South has been awarded a \$150,000 two-year grant by ViiV Healthcare, Inc., to help establish a direct mentorship and leadership development program to improve health outcomes for youth (aged 13 – 24) living with and impacted by HIV.

“AIDS Alabama South has been working with youth and young adults for many years. We facilitate and participate in numerous HIV prevention and advocacy events continuously. The new program is an opportunity for HIV-positive youth to connect with their peers, learn how to manage their health, build relationships and navigate the health care system as they grow older,” said Kimberly McKeand, Director of Development, AIDS Alabama South.

Support from ViiV Healthcare will be used to develop a sustainable *BuddyUp* youth mentorship program for HIV positive youth in transition from pediatric care into the general health care system. *BuddyUp* is a support group led by and for youth living with HIV ages 13-24 in Mobile County, AL. The program will help young people connect with peers on life experiences, and form friendships with others experiencing similar situations. In addition to having youth peers and a ‘peer champion’ to help guide the program – youth can be matched with young adults who have successfully transitioned from pediatric to adult care and/or AIDS Alabama South staff, and/or other community members who would like to be involved in supporting youth.

In addition, the grant will also enable AIDS Alabama South to serve as a monthly supportive resource for parents, guardians and other loved ones - where researchers, service providers, mentors, and AIDS Alabama South staff can present HIV data, receive feedback, and everyone can ask questions. The monthly supportive program will be called, Koffee Kupp.

“We’ve learned that when supporting youth living with HIV to successfully engage in care, mentorship is effective, as well as life changing.” said Megan Falkenhan, ViiV Healthcare’s Program Lead for Positive Action for Youth. “Through mentorship, youth get to explore whole-person health – mind, body, and spirit – and take charge of their HIV as part of this exploration. By working with mentors and peers to unpack the barriers to their whole-person health, HIV becomes manageable, and one piece of their bigger story and long-term wellness.”

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AIDS Alabama South, in Mobile, AL is the only AIDS Service Organization between New Orleans, Louisiana and Pensacola, Florida and north to Montgomery, Alabama. AIDS Alabama South covers a twelve county catchment area covering 12,545 square miles of Southwest Alabama and provides an array of life-sustaining services to persons living with HIV. The number of active clients currently served is 366, with 2,742+ prevalent cases of HIV in our service area who are eligible to potentially request services.

For More Information Contact

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United Way  
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