

## QC boosts HIV testing, response

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With the reported surge in new human immunodeficiency virus cases across the country, the **Quezon City government** has committed to further boost testing capabilities to minimize HIV transmission and provide immediate treatment to those who will test positive for the viral disease. From January to May, the city health department recorded 421 HIV cases, up 7.7 percent from 391 cases logged during the same period in 2024.

City hall said 35 percent or 149 who were diagnosed this year are among the young population or those between 15 and 24 years old.

“With the significant increase in HIV cases among ages 15 to 24, we make sure that all of them are receiving the treatment they need in the city’s social hygiene clinics,” **Mayor Joy Belmonte** said in a statement over the weekend.

The intensified testing conducted by the local government over the past three years may be a factor in the increase in HIV cases.

In the first five months of the year, the city government said over 21,000 people have been tested, up 16.7 percent in the same period in 2024.

“We are strengthening our testing capacities so that we will be able to find those with HIV and link them to treatment,” Rolando Cruz, chief of the **city’s epidemiology and surveillance department**, said.

The local government said it remains on track to achieve its Zero@2030 goal, which aims for zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS-related deaths as well as zero HIV-related stigma and discrimination by 2030.

The local government is set to open a social hygiene and sundown clinic in District 6, which will complete the citywide network of accessible and equitable health services for all.

These clinics, which are open beyond regular clinic hours, offer free and confidential services such as HIV testing, pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis, antiretroviral therapy and treatment for other sexually transmitted infections.

The city’s service delivery network, which refers persons living with HIV from testing centers to treatment hubs, also provides psychosocial interventions, treatment adherence counseling and community mobilization, especially in underserved and high-risk populations.

“I am calling on all young QCitizens to be part of this advocacy. This fight cannot be won without you,” Belmonte said. “You are not just the most affected, you are also our most powerful weapon. By stepping up, speaking out and getting tested, you are helping build a healthier, more livable and stigma-free Quezon City.”