

HIV COUNSELING AND TESTING PROGRAM

What we do:

The HIV Education and Prevention Services Branch, HIV Counseling and Testing (C&T) Program includes the following services: HIV prevention counseling, standard and rapid HIV testing services, HIV rapid test kits for local health jurisdictions (LHJs), as well as HIV counselor training. HIV C&T services are provided by 54 LHJs and their subcontractors at both anonymous and confidential HIV C&T sites in California at no or low cost.

On January 1, 2008, the California Department of Public Health, Office of AIDS (CDPH/OA) introduced a program restructure, launching a new two-tier HIV C&T service model to serve the needs of both low-risk and high-risk clients. One of the main goals of the HIV C&T restructure is to maximize staff resources for those at highest risk for acquiring HIV, while still serving those at lower risk of contracting HIV by ensuring they receive an HIV test. Using a self-administered Client Assessment Questionnaire “low-risk” clients are provided an HIV test and educational information through a brochure or video; self-identified “high-risk” clients are offered an HIV test and traditional risk-reduction counseling. In addition, hepatitis C virus (HCV) testing for injection drug users (IDUs) became fully integrated into the HIV C&T Program as of January 1, 2008.

Who is eligible:

HIV C&T services are available to all individuals who may have engaged in behavior that places them at risk for contracting HIV. HIV testing is available to all who request a test. High-risk behavior includes any activity involving the exchange of potentially infectious body fluids. Risk-reduction HIV C&T is available for all clients who test HIV positive and populations considered at high risk for HIV transmission:

- Men who have sex with men (MSM);
- Females who have sex with MSM;
- IDUs and their sex and/or needle-sharing partners;
- Sex industry workers and their sex partners;
- Sex partners of HIV-positive individuals;
- Stimulant users (i.e., methamphetamine, cocaine, crack);
- Transgender individuals; and
- Individuals with a recent diagnosis of syphilis or gonorrhea.



What we have done:

Many agencies throughout California have implemented rapid HIV testing. CDPH/OA has worked with HIV C&T sites to provide the necessary training to implement rapid HIV testing effectively. With rapid HIV testing, test results are available within 20 to 40 minutes, providing HIV counselors an unprecedented opportunity to engage clients within a single session. Virtually everyone who is tested using this technology receives their preliminary test results. Clients who test positive on the preliminary rapid HIV test are advised to return for confirmatory test results usually within one week.

CDPH/OA identified the need to increase HIV C&T client linkages to care programs and has provided additional support to HIV C&T sites for medical referrals. Partner Counseling and Referral Services are also offered to all individuals testing HIV positive.

What you should know:

- Annually, approximately 160,000 HIV tests are provided statewide through the HIV C&T Program.
- Prior to rapid HIV testing, one-quarter to one-third of clients did not return for their test results.
- Currently, 47 LHJs have been trained to offer rapid HIV tests.
- Approximately 50 percent of CDPH/OA's current volume of testing is conducted by rapid HIV testing. CDPH/OA's goal is to provide 85 percent rapid testing statewide.

Helpful resources:

- To find a HIV C&T site near you or information about other local HIV/AIDS services, see the *California AIDS Clearinghouse Resource Directory* at: www.hivinfo.org.
- For information about HIV/AIDS, call the:
 - *California HIV/AIDS/STD Hotline* at (800) 367-AIDS (2437) (English/Spanish); (888) 225-AIDS (TDD); or visit: www.AIDShotline.org.
 - *National AIDS Hotline* at (800) CDC-INFO (232-4636) (English/Spanish) or (888) 232-6348 (TDD).
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site: www.cdc.gov/HIV and www.hivtest.org.
- For more information about the HIV C&T Program: www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/AIDS/Pages/OACT.aspx.
- For more information about HCV: www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/AIDS/Documents/FSHEPC2008-04.pdf.
- For more information on CDPH/OA's mission, programs, HIV/AIDS resources, and the HIV C&T Program see: www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/AIDS.