

Partner Counseling and Referral Services (PCRS)

Overview & Goal of PCRS

The goals of Partner Counseling and Referral Services (PCRS) are to assist HIV-positive clients with informing their sexual and/or needle-sharing partners of their HIV exposure risk and to encourage those partners to seek HIV counseling, testing and related services that may help them to reduce their own risk of transmitting or contracting HIV. PCRS programs play a critical role in identifying those individuals most at risk for HIV infection, and linking those who are infected to early medical care and treatment.

New C&T Program Reimbursable

The C&T Program is now reimbursing test sites for the *delivery* of PCRS if selected by a client, and not simply the offer. Offering PCRS to any client that tests HIV positive is one of the elements included in a typical disclosure session. All HIV Counselor II's are trained in Basic I to be able to describe and offer PCRS options to a client.

Staff who have attended the recommended *HIV Disclosure and Partner Services Training for PCRS* delivered by the California Department of Public Health, STD Control Branch (CDPH/STDCB) are able to *deliver* the following three disclosure options as described:

Self Disclosure—The newly identified HIV-positive client chooses to notify a partner him/herself. The HIV counseling and testing (C&T) program staff guides and prepares the client before disclosure.

Dual Disclosure—The client chooses to notify a partner in the presence of the C&T counselor. The counselor supports the client during disclosure and acts as a resource for the partner.

Provider Disclosure (anonymous third party)—The client prefers a professional to notify a partner, and gives his/her C&T counselor identifying and locating information for partner(s). Most often, providers give this info to Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS), also known as Communicable Disease Investigators (CDI), who then locate, notify and offer HIV testing to the named partners, keeping client identity strictly confidential.

Making PCRS Accessible

PCRS should be discussed with any client who tests HIV positive. All counselors should understand the purpose of PCRS and what the three available options are for positive clients (included in the Basic I Counselor Training currently). At a minimum, counselors must be able to **offer** a HIV-positive client access to PCRS by informing the

client that services exist to inform sexual and/or needle-sharing partners if desired, and briefly explaining to the client the options available to them.

Ideally, to ensure access to PCRS for clients who decide to utilize the service a test site should have staff available that can **deliver** the three PCRS options. Only counselors who have successfully completed the approved aforementioned CET offered by the CDPH/STDCB are considered to be trained and able to **deliver** the various PCRS options to clients. If there are no counselors or C&T Program staff trained to provide the three PCRS options, the test site must have an up-to-date PCRS **referral** option available for clients who would like to access the service.

PCRS Delivery, Documentation, and Reimbursement

The following is a description of the PCRS options available along with their respective reimbursement amounts and documentation procedures.

Note: If none of these can be delivered on-site by trained C&T Program staff and a PCRS *referral* is made instead, this is documented as a PCRS referral on the CIF. The test site will be reimbursed the usual amount for HIV-positive referrals.

1. **Self Disclosure:** Clients who decide to notify their partners on their own will be “coached” on how to disclose to their partner. The coaching process increases the likelihood of a successful disclosure experience by providing an in-depth analysis of specific relationship dynamics. Role-playing and an assessment for domestic violence are typical components of a self-disclosure counseling session.

PCRS Documentation & Reimbursement:

If a counselor trained to provide PCRS delivers this service to a client, it would be documented on the CIF by printing their initials in the boxes titled *PCRS initials*, and by marking the box “Skill building with client for self notification” under the area titled *PCRS activities*. The reimbursement amount is \$ 20.

2. **Dual Disclosure:** Clients who would like to disclose to their partner in person, but would like support and guidance at the time of disclosure may choose to disclose in the presence of a trained counselor or PCRS provider.

PCRS Documentation & Reimbursement:

If a counselor trained to provide PCRS delivers this option to a client, it would be documented on the CIF by printing their initials in the boxes titled *PCRS initials*, and by marking the box “Dual client/partner session” under the area titled *PCRS activities*. If trained personnel other than the original HIV disclosure counselor provide the service, they will indicate this by listing their own initials in the box titled *PCRS initials*. The reimbursement amount is \$ 40.

3. **Provider Disclosure/ Anonymous Third Party Notification:** A client who would like their partner(s) to be informed of their possible exposure to HIV but is unable or unwilling to contact their partner(s) themselves can delegate the disclosure task to trained county staff. Trained staff (i.e., local or state DIS) will

confidentially inform the sexual and/or needle-sharing partners of the client about their possible exposure to HIV. Once informed, the partner will be offered an HIV test and those who test positive will be referred for medical treatment, social support, PCRS and counseling on ways to prevent further transmission of HIV. Partners who test negative can be counseled on personal risk reduction for the future.

If a client chooses this option, a trained counselor or C&T program staff member will describe the notification process that will occur and collect the necessary partner locating information to pass on to local or state DIS so that notification, testing and necessary referral offers can occur. The locating information necessary to ensure a successful notification attempt will be collected and recorded on a CDPH/STDCB Partner Information Form (PIF). Once the PIF is completed, this service option becomes defined and reimbursed as Partner Names Elicitation and the LHJ begins the process of notifying partners. Use of any other form to collect partner information requires prior approval by CDPH/OA. Reimbursement will occur regardless of whether the partner(s) identified by the original client are able to be located.

PCRS Documentation & Reimbursement:

If a counselor trained to provide PCRS delivers this service to a client, it would be documented on the CIF by printing their initials in the boxes titled *PCRS initials*, and by marking the box "Anonymous third party notification" under the area titled *PCRS activities*. If trained personnel other than the original HIV disclosure counselor provide the service, they will indicate this by listing their own initials in the box titled *PCRS initials*. Checking and initialing the box indicates to CDPH/OA that the process of Anonymous Third Party Notification was initiated and partner information was collected by PCRS-trained staff. The reimbursement amount is \$ 40.