



KAREN L. SMITH, MD, MPH  
Director and State Public Health Officer

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
California Department of Public Health



GAVIN NEWSOM  
Governor

January 8, 2019

Dear Colleague:

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a powerful HIV prevention tool. When taken consistently, PrEP reduces the risk of HIV infection by at least 90%. Given the benefits of PrEP, The California Integrated HIV Surveillance, Prevention and Care Plan prioritizes PrEP in *Strategy A: Improve PrEP Utilization* and calls upon healthcare providers, public health, and other partners to collaborate to expand PrEP access.

PrEP is a method for people who do not have HIV to prevent infection by taking a combination of two antiretroviral drugs, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate and emtricitabine. The combination pill (brand name Truvada) is taken daily and is Food and Drug Administration-approved to prevent HIV in adults and adolescents at substantial risk for infection. PrEP is safe and generally well tolerated. Use of PrEP does not replace other HIV prevention methods such as condoms. PrEP is effective at preventing sexual transmission of HIV in men, women, and transgender people, as well as transmission through injection drug use. It does not prevent transmission of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Despite this effectiveness, several barriers have limited the availability of PrEP. These barriers have included costs for patients and an insufficient number of providers who are comfortable prescribing PrEP.

PrEP medications are covered by most private insurance programs, as well as Medicare, Medi-Cal, and Covered California plans. To further remove cost as a barrier to PrEP, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Office of AIDS launched the PrEP-Assistance Program (PrEP-AP) in April 2018 to assist insured and uninsured individuals with incomes less than 500% of the federal poverty line. PrEP-AP clients receive assistance with access to PrEP medications and PrEP-related medical costs including coverage of PrEP-related medical copayments, lab testing, and STI treatment. All medical providers who accept Medi-Cal are eligible to join the PrEP-AP Clinical Provider Network which reimburses providers for PrEP-related medical services. To join the PrEP-AP Clinical Provider Network, complete the [Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Assistance Program Paneling Questionnaire for Clinical Providers](#).

California primary care providers already prescribing PrEP confirm that it can be effectively integrated into any primary care practice and that experience treating HIV infection is not necessary to prescribe PrEP. Clinicians interested in incorporating PrEP into their practice have access to a range of no-cost training services (see select



additional resource list below) provided by California-based organizations including online provider toolkits, academic detailing, and a clinician consultation hotline. CDPH recommends that all primary care providers provide routine opt-out HIV testing and discuss prevention options including PrEP. A brief sexual and drug use history is indicated to understand if a patient will benefit from PrEP. Indicating that your practice offers or refers for PrEP with brochures and other information can facilitate these conversations in a busy primary care practice.

California has made substantial progress in expanding access to PrEP throughout the state and the PrEP-AP program can help improve this access further. Every day your work as healthcare providers helps to keep Californians healthy and makes it possible for us to envision a future free of new HIV infections. We look forward to working with you to maximize access to PrEP as a method to prevent HIV infection and to give Californians the tools to stay healthy.

Sincerely,



Philip J. Peters, MD  
Office of AIDS Medical Officer  
Center for Infectious Diseases  
California Department of Public Health

**Select Additional Resources** (Please click on a resource to be directed to the webpage)

- [California's Integrated HIV Surveillance, Prevention, and Care Plan](#)
- [PrEP Assistance Program](#) The PrEP-AP website provides detailed information for clinicians, clients, and enrollment workers on eligibility, benefits, and enrollment.
- [The Pacific AIDS Education & Training Center](#) PAETC has developed a [PrEP Provider Toolkit](#), [Clinical Guidelines for PrEP](#), and information on [PrEP Academic Detailing](#).
- [PleasePrEPMe.org](#) has extensive resources on PrEP including a searchable directory of PrEP providers. The [Brief Guide for Providers \(PDF\)](#) is a short practical guide for providers integrating PrEP and PEP in to their practice.
- The University of California at San Francisco's [Clinical Consultation Center](#) The Clinical Consultation Center provides clinical consultation for PrEP decision-making for healthcare providers at (855) 448-7737 or (855) HIV-PrEP is available Monday – Friday, 6 a.m. – 5 p.m. PST.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention publish [clinical practice guidelines for PrEP](#)