

This newsletter is organized to align the updates with Strategies from the ***Laying a Foundation for Getting to Zero: California's Integrated HIV Surveillance, Prevention, and Care Plan*** (Integrated Plan). The [Integrated Plan](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/CDPH%20Document%20Library/IP_2016_Final_ADA.pdf) is available on the Office of AIDS' (OA) website at www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/CDPH%20Document%20Library/IP_2016_Final_ADA.pdf.

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Staff Highlight:

OA would like to congratulate **Ahmad Zahbihi** on his promotion to the Chief of the Quality Assurance and Training (QAT) Unit/Staff Services Manager I in the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) Branch within the Office of AIDS. Ahmad has spent the last three plus years as a QAT Coordinator/Associate Governmental Program Analyst (AGPA) in the QAT Unit. During that time, he was instrumental in standing up the new unit, helping to create various processes and procedures, and leading multiple audit initiatives and quality assurance efforts. He has also quickly become a subject matter expert in developing and maintaining our on-demand training library. In his role as an AGPA, he gained valuable experience in our agile system lifecycle, and conducting and facilitating virtual meetings and trainings, which will serve him well in his new position. He is also an active member of the ADAP Team Building Workgroup, which facilitates monthly team building events for the ADAP Branch. This past year, Ahmad has also participated in NASTAD's Trauma Informed Approaches Learning Community and in the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Leadership Development Program, and he looks forward to implementing much of what he's learned into his new role.

Prior to working in the QAT Unit, Ahmad was an ADAP Site Advisor/Staff Services Analyst for the ADAP Eligibility Operations Section for



two years, where he conducted secondary reviews of ADAP and Employer Based Health Insurance Premium Payment (EB-HIPP) Program applications. Before joining CDPH, Ahmad volunteered with the International Rescue Committee helping refugees, and was also a Team Member Associate for Walgreen's Pharmacy, where he assisted patients with entering and fulfilling prescriptions and billing their health insurance. Ahmad also holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biomedical Sciences from CA State University of Sacramento.

On a personal note, Ahmad lives with his wife, Liezel, and their border collie, Zelda,

in Carmichael. In his spare time, he enjoys mountain biking, playing video games, watching scary movies, eating spicy foods, and drinking copious amounts of coffee.

HIV Awareness:

March 10 is **National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** (NWGHAAD). NWGHAAD is celebrated to raise awareness about the impact of HIV on women and girls and support those at risk or living with HIV. This day is meant to encourage women and girls to make the best choices when it comes to their sexual health and to protect themselves from HIV through prevention, testing and treatment.

In addition, **March 20th** is **National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day** (NNHAAD). This day is observed to promote HIV testing, prevention, and treatment in American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian communities. NNHAAD addresses the impact HIV has on their communities and emphasizes the importance of overcoming HIV stigma.

March 31st is **International Transgender Day of Visibility** (TDOV). This day is observed to acknowledge the many contributions made by transgender and non-binary people and celebrate the courage and beauty of living authentically. TDOV is also meant to educate and bring attention to the continued struggle faced by those in the transgender community and raising awareness of the continued rising hate, discrimination, and stigma faced by transgender people worldwide.

General Office Updates:

COVID-19

OA is committed to providing updated information related to COVID-19. We have disseminated a number of documents in an effort to keep our clients and stakeholders informed. Please refer to our [OA website](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/doa/pages/oamain.aspx) at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/doa/pages/oamain.aspx, to stay informed.

Mpox

OA is committed to providing updated information related to mpox. We have partnered with the Division of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC), a program within the Center of Infectious Diseases, and have disseminated a number of documents in an effort to keep our clients and stakeholders informed. Please refer to the [DCDC website](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/mpox.aspx) at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/mpox.aspx>, to stay informed.

Racial Justice and Health Equity

The Racial & Health Equity (RHE) workgroup aims to gain insight and understanding of racial and health equity efforts throughout CDPH and take next steps towards advancing RHE in our work. The workgroup has formed subcommittees to address community stakeholder engagement challenges, improve OA policy and practices to support RHE and increasing OA knowledge and attitude on RHE among leadership and staff.

HIV/STD/HCV Integration

As the lead state department in the COVID-19 response, CDPH has re-directed hundreds of staff to this effort. Because of this, the integration efforts of the OA, STD Control Branch, and Office of Viral Hepatitis Prevention are postponed indefinitely. Please refer to our [OA website](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/doa/pages/oamain.aspx) at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/doa/pages/oamain.aspx, to stay informed.

Ending the Epidemics Strategic Plan

ENDING THE EPIDEMICS STRATEGIC PLAN OA/STD

OA and the STD Control Branch are pleased to report that the roll-out of the **California Strategic Plan** to address the syndemic of HIV, HCV and STIs continues as we finalize our phase-2

Implementation Blueprint for release in March.

Below is the [website that documents our work](#), including the phase-1 roadmap, the recording of our Statewide Town Hall, and the list of completed regional listening sessions. Thank you for engaging with this strategic planning process and helping us make it better!

- <https://facenteconsulting.com/work/ending-the-epidemics/>

Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE)

On February 28th CDPH-OA co-hosted a webinar with the UCLA Center for HIV Identification, Prevention, and Treatment Services (CHIPTS) Regional EHE Learning Collaborative to share the connections between EHE work and the Ending the Epidemics Strategic Plan. We were joined on a panel by the California HIV Research Program (CHRP), the ETE Coalition, San Diego, and San Francisco Counties. A recording of this session will be sent as a link through our OA listserv when it is available.

Strategy A: Improve Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Utilization

PrEP-Assistance Program (AP)

As of February 24, 2023, there are 203 PrEP-AP enrollment sites covering 189 clinics that currently make up the PrEP-AP Provider network.

A [comprehensive list of the PrEP-AP Provider Network](https://cdphdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6878d3a1c9724418aebfea96878cd5b2) can be found at <https://cdphdata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6878d3a1c9724418aebfea96878cd5b2>.

[Data on active PrEP-AP clients](#) can be found in the three tables displayed on page 4 of this newsletter.

Strategy B: Increase and Improve HIV Testing

OA has expanded its Building Healthy Online Communities (BHOC) self-testing program to allow for rapid OraQuick test orders in all jurisdictions in California. The program, [TakeMeHome®](https://takemehome.org/) (<https://takemehome.org/>), is advertised on gay dating apps, where users see an ad for home testing and are offered a free HIV-home test kit.



Between January 23 (when this expansion was initiated) and January 31, 2023, 191 individuals ordered self-test kits, with 171 individuals ordering 2 tests. Most individuals ordering tests identify as men (86.3% of those sharing gender) and Hispanic/Latinx (60.1% of those sharing race or ethnicity). Thirty-eight (20%) orders came in through the Spanish language portal. One-third of participants reported never having tested for HIV before (30%); another third had not tested for HIV in at least one year (33%). OA is excited to help make HIV testing more accessible through this program.

OA's existing TakeMeHome® Program continues in the six California Consortium Phase I Ending the HIV Epidemic in America counties. In the first 29 months, between September 1, 2020, and January 31, 2023, 4738 tests have been distributed. This month, mail-in lab tests (including dried blood spot tests for HIV, syphilis, and Hepatitis C, as well as 3-site tests for gonorrhea and chlamydia) accounted for 196 (68.8%) of the 285 total tests distributed.

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Insurance Coverage:

Current Age	PrEP-AP Only		PrEP-AP With Medi-Cal		PrEP-AP With Medicare		PrEP-AP With Private Insurance		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	244	7%	---	---	---	---	23	1%	267	8%
25 - 34	1,035	31%	1	0%	---	---	251	7%	1,287	38%
35 - 44	854	25%	---	---	2	0%	185	5%	1,041	31%
45 - 64	438	13%	1	0%	21	1%	105	3%	565	17%
65+	22	1%	---	---	181	5%	10	0%	213	6%
TOTAL	2,593	77%	2	0%	204	6%	574	17%	3,373	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Race/Ethnicity:

Current Age	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	143	4%	---	---	32	1%	9	0%	1	0%	57	2%	4	0%	21	1%	267	8%
25 - 34	750	22%	---	---	114	3%	87	3%	2	0%	265	8%	5	0%	64	2%	1,287	38%
35 - 44	676	20%	3	0%	84	2%	39	1%	1	0%	193	6%	6	0%	39	1%	1,041	31%
45 - 64	361	11%	2	0%	31	1%	16	0%	---	---	138	4%	---	---	17	1%	565	17%
65+	22	1%	1	0%	4	0%	4	0%	---	---	178	5%	---	---	4	0%	213	6%
TOTAL	1,952	58%	6	0%	265	8%	155	5%	4	0%	831	25%	15	0%	145	4%	3,373	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Gender and Race/Ethnicity:

Gender	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	175	5%	---	---	2	0%	6	0%	---	---	14	0%	1	0%	2	0%	200	6%
Male	1,604	48%	6	0%	248	7%	147	4%	4	0%	797	24%	11	0%	131	4%	2,948	87%
Trans	160	5%	---	---	15	0%	2	0%	---	---	14	0%	1	0%	3	0%	195	6%
Unknown	13	0%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	6	0%	2	0%	9	0%	30	1%
TOTAL	1,952	58%	6	0%	265	8%	155	5%	4	0%	831	25%	15	0%	145	4%	3,373	100%

All PrEP-AP charts prepared by: ADAP Fiscal Forecasting Evaluation and Monitoring (AFFEM) Section, ADAP and Care Evaluation and Informatics Branch, Office of AIDS. Client was eligible for PrEP-AP as of run date: 02/28/2023 at 12:00:53 AM
Data source: ADAP Enrollment System. Site assignments are based on the site that submitted the most recent application.

Of individuals ordering a test in January, 29.5% reported never before receiving an HIV test, and 36.5% were 18 to 29 years of age. Among individuals reporting race or ethnicity, 43.4% were Hispanic/Latinx, and of those reporting sexual history, 37.2% indicated 3 or more partners in the past 12 months. To date, 519 recipients have completed an anonymous follow up survey, with 94.4% indicating they would recommend TakeMeHome HIV test kits to a friend. The most common behavioral risks of HIV exposure reported in the follow up survey were being a man who has sex with men (72.8%) or having had more than one sex partner in the past 12 months (63.2%).

Strategy G: Improve Availability of HIV Care

Request for Applications for Funding

OA's HIV Care Branch is looking for a new Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program provider for Santa Cruz County. We will be releasing a Request for Application (RFA) (#23-10079) later in March. The [RFA will be posted on our website](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/doa/pages/oa_rfa.aspx) at www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cid/doa/pages/oa_rfa.aspx.

HOPWA provides housing assistance and supportive services to prevent or reduce

homelessness for persons living with HIV (PLWH). Local government entities (e.g., health departments or community development agencies) and non-profit community-based organizations may apply. The award amount for Santa Cruz County is approximately \$215,353. The RFA will include key dates, including information on a technical assistance webinar.

Strategy J: Increase Rates of Insurance/Benefits Coverage for PLWH or on PrEP

As of February 24, 2023, the number of ADAP clients enrolled in each respective ADAP Insurance Program are shown in the chart below.

Strategy K: Increase and Improve HIV Prevention and Support Services for People Who Use Drugs

The X-Waiver is Eliminated: Now What?

As of Jan 1, 2023, and effective immediately, clinicians no longer need to apply for an X-waiver to prescribe buprenorphine for medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD), thus significantly reducing barriers to MOUD access. The DEA [posted a letter explaining these changes](#), and it includes encouragement for clinicians to start prescribing for patients with opioids use disorder. **Please share widely.**

ADAP Insurance Assistance Program	Number of Clients Enrolled	Percentage Change from January
Employer Based Health Insurance Premium Payment (EB-HIPP) Program	489	- 2.78%
Office of AIDS Health Insurance Premium Payment (OA-HIPP) Program	5,803	+ 1.38%
Medicare Part D Premium Payment (MDPP) Program	1,503	- 17.05%
Total	7,795	- 3.03%

Source: ADAP Enrollment System

New Resource: Training Materials on Sex Worker Health and Harm Reduction 101

The National Harm Reduction Technical Assistance Center (NHRTAC) published a new resource, [NHRTAC Training Deck on Sex Worker Health and Harm Reduction](#), to provide an overview of the basics of sex worker health and harm reduction philosophy. Developed with NASTAD, these materials are customizable for in-house staff training purposes for use by health departments and community-based syringe services programs (SSPs) to introduce staff to the intersection of harm reduction and sex worker health.

READ: Opinion Piece: America Has Lost the War on Drugs: Here's What Needs to Happen Next

The New York Times published a series of [articles addressing America's overdose epidemic](#) and featured this piece detailing how the war on drugs contributed to the epidemic.

Strategy M: Improve Usability of Collected Data

Action Needed by ARIES Users

To help prepare for the launch of HIV Care Connect (HCC), the system that will replace ARIES in Fall 2023, agency managers should review and confirm the contact person on their Agency screen in ARIES. The agency contact identified for each agency will communicate with OA regarding the rollout of HCC. OA will reach out to agency contacts for assistance with tasks such as identifying and validating active user information, distributing information to agency staff, and sharing feedback from users. The contact may be any individual from the agency – a manager, an IT specialist, a technical lead, a data specialist, or another staff member. Additional information and instructions are located in the [Data System Notice No. 2](#).

Strategy N: Enhance Collaborations and Community Involvement

HOPWA Annual Action Plan Public Comment Period

A public comment period for the 2023-2024 Annual Action Plan (AAP) of multiple state housing programs, including OA's Housing Opportunities for Persons with HIV/AIDS (HOPWA) Program, begins on March 6, 2023 and ends April 7, 2023. The [AAP will be posted](#) to <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/policy-and-research/plans-and-reports>. Comments and questions can be emailed to ConsolidatedPlan@hcd.ca.gov. Comments may also be mailed to:

**Department of Housing and
Community Development
Attn: Federal Branch
2020 W. El Camino Avenue, Suite 200
Sacramento, CA 95833**

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is also hosting a Public Hearing Webinar on Thursday, March 16, 2023, from 2:00 – 3:30 PM. The hearing will summarize updates to the 2023-2024 AAP, provide public comment opportunity, and allow time for questions. [Register for the webinar](#) at <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/9tJ6u9euvqDopE9LBMeY4p5PaSW7QEUzeEkQ->

Requests for accommodation, translation services, and for auxiliary aides and services to allow non-English speaking residents and residents with disabilities to access the meeting may be submitted by email to ConsolidatedPlan@hcd.ca.gov, or requested by phone to Chelsea Meuleman at (916) 450-3083. Please submit your requests by March 9, 2023.

Women's Health Summit

On March 12, 2023, The Sacramento Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority,

Learning from our Legacy: Dismantling Health Inequities for Women



Dr. Zenja Watkins
MD-OBGYN



Dr. Demisha Burns
Ph.D., MSW



Dr. Sami Lubega
MD- HIV Specialist



Dawn Brown
NAMI

Join us for a 2023 Women's Health Summit!

Discussions on:

Reproductive Health Mental Health HIV Care & Prevention

Catered food, entertainment, & more!



March 12, 2023
12:30pm-4:00pm
Holiday Inn - 300 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
16th Floor
Sierra Conference Room

FREE Event
RSVP required. Space is limited.



Incorporated, Sacramento National Coalition of 100 Black Women, and One Community Health will host the 2023 Women's Health Summit. The summit will bring together women leaders, health experts, and advocates from California to address the critical issues of reproductive health, mental health, and HIV care and prevention. The theme for this year's summit is "Learning from Our Legacy: Dismantling Health Inequities Among Women."

The summit will provide a platform for women to share their experiences and knowledge on how to address health disparities that disproportionately affect women, particularly those in marginalized communities. Discussions will focus on reproductive health, mental health, and HIV care and prevention, as these are areas where women continue to face significant challenges.

The keynote speakers and panelists at the

summit will engage participants in discussing a range of topics, including access to healthcare, education and awareness, stigma and discrimination, policy and advocacy, and community engagement. They will share best practices, research findings, and innovative solutions to address these issues.

For logistics, please see a portion of the flyer displayed above.

Registration is now open. Interested participants can visit [the summit's event page](https://2023WomenSummit.eventbrite.com) at <https://2023WomenSummit.eventbrite.com> to learn more and register for free.

If you have any questions, please contact Keshia Lynch at klynch@onecommunityhealth.com.

For questions regarding this issue of *The OA Voice*, please send an e-mail to angelique.skinner@cdph.ca.gov.