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



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.
Governor

August 7, 2015

Dear Colleague:

Approximately 5,000 Californians become newly infected with HIV every year—almost 14 people every day. Although California has made significant progress in increasing the proportion of HIV-infected Californians who are receiving effective HIV treatment and are virally suppressed, which reduces HIV transmission by 96%, California has unfortunately not yet been successful in significantly reducing the annual number of new HIV infections.

HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis, or PrEP, is an important new HIV prevention option in which persons who are HIV uninfected but at significant risk for acquiring HIV take one pill a day to prevent acquiring HIV. The medication currently approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration for PrEP is co-formulated emtricitabine/tenofovir (Truvada®). The pill can reduce the risk of HIV infection by up to 92 percent¹ when consistently taken once a day as prescribed. PrEP does not replace other risk reduction options such as reducing the number of risk exposures, consistent use of condoms, and suppressing viral load through use of HIV medication among those who are HIV infected. However, this biomedical intervention will assist many for whom traditional risk reduction options may be insufficient to avoid infection.

With the advent of PrEP, we now have the opportunity to significantly lower the number of new infections. The California Department of Public Health, Office of AIDS (CDPH/OA) supports the use of PrEP as a critical first-line intervention for those individuals at greatest risk of HIV exposure, including gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender persons, persons who inject drugs, and others at high risk for infection. The addition of PrEP to the toolbox of risk reduction options is a significant advancement in HIV prevention. The experience of California clinicians who are already providing PrEP confirms that it is feasible for PrEP to be provided by all health care providers as part of primary care.

Since the United States Public Health Service release of the Pre-exposure Prophylaxis for the Prevention of HIV Infection Clinical Practice Guidelines² in 2014, patient demand

¹ [CDC PrEP Fact Sheet, May 2014](#)

² [PrEP Clinical Practice Guidelines](#)

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for PrEP has increased, and medical providers throughout the state are responding to the demand. PrEP medicine and clinical monitoring is covered by major private insurance programs, as well as Medicare, Medi-Cal and Covered California. Financial assistance may be available to individuals seeking PrEP, whether they have insurance or not. [The Fair Pricing Coalition website](#) has a concise summary of PrEP assistance programs.

In addition, there are several resources available to clinicians prescribing or considering prescribing PrEP:

- The PrEP Clinical Consultant telephone line at (855) 448-7737 or (855) HIV-PrEP is available Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. PST.
- The Pacific AIDS Education & Training Center (PAETC) offers free technical assistance and training related to PrEP and clinical practice: www.PAETC.org, e-mail: paetcmail@ucsf.edu or telephone (415) 476-6153.
- The San Francisco Department of Public Health offers free technical assistance and training related to PrEP, clinical practice and community engagement: www.getsfcb.org, e-mail: GET.SFCBA@SFDPH.ORG or telephone: (415) 437-6226

If you have questions or would like training or technical assistance to provide PrEP, CDPH OA is happy to assist you. Please e-mail: PrEP@cdph.ca.gov to arrange free training or technical assistance related to your PrEP requests.

In an effort to ensure access to PrEP is available throughout the state, CDPH/OA has developed a Directory of California PrEP Providers available on the CDPH/OA website: www.cdph.ca.gov/OAPrEP. The directory will be updated regularly in order to provide up-to-date accurate information to clients interested in PrEP. If you would like to add yourself and/or your clinic as a PrEP provider in the directory, please contact PrEP@cdph.ca.gov.

CDPH/OA is also working with partners throughout the state to write California PrEP treatment guidelines to address local provider needs and resources.

As the agency charged with coordinating state programs, services, and activities relating to HIV/AIDS, CDPH/OA is excited to see the the many responses to PrEP occurring throughout the state, including demonstration projects, development of PrEP

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clinics, community and clinician educational forums, and integration of PrEP into high-impact HIV prevention programs. We are committed to the expansion of PrEP availability in California, and will keep you informed of developments related to PrEP on an ongoing basis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "K. Mark".

Karen Mark, M.D., Ph.D., Chief
Office of AIDS
Center for Infectious Diseases
California Department of Public Health