

**Challenges Associated with HIV Testing, Counseling, and Linkage to Care  
August 26, 2013  
SUMMARY  
GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

**GROUP 1**

*Represented agencies:* Clayton County Board of Health, Center for Pan-Asian Community Services, DeKalb County Board of Health, Mercy Care, and Southside Medical Center

<b>Question</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<b>1. What types of data would be useful to help plan testing events?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A community newsletter that provides information on the latest HIV testing and counseling activities of health districts and CBOs. The newsletter should highlight past successes, as well as current/ongoing and future HIV testing activities</li><li>• Access to geospatial data, so that agencies can better plan testing and linkage activities</li><li>• More information about the behavior and lifestyle of those populations that are at greatest risk for an HIV infection</li></ul>
<b>2. How would your agency like for this information to be disseminated?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Through a community newsletter.</li><li>• Through social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, etc.) or a mobile application</li><li>• Through in-services</li></ul>
<b>3. How are testing locations identified?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By collaborating with Partner Services to identify appropriate testing sites</li><li>• Through GA HIV surveillance data</li><li>• A barrier to identifying appropriate testing locations is that surveillance data is difficult to obtain from private providers</li></ul>
<b>4. How does funding impact where testing takes place?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Funding impacts agencies' abilities to provide incentives for patients, hire staff, and to provide HIV testing and Partner Services</li><li>• Funding also determines HIV testing approaches as some funding is designated for targeted testing, while other funds are meant for routine testing</li></ul>

**GROUP 2**

*Represented agencies: AID Atlanta, Cobb & Douglas Public Health, Sconier’s Homeless Preventative Organization Inc., and Wholistic Stress Control Institute*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<b>5. What are the current challenges associated with HIV testing and counseling?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding the target population</li> <li>• Establishing the right partnerships</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Stigma</li> <li>• Access to services</li> <li>• Staffing</li> </ul>
<b>6. What is being done to address these challenges?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating needs assessments and working with gatekeepers in order to understand and gain access to the target communities</li> <li>• Using social media to reach the community</li> <li>• Distributing flyers throughout the community to advertise testing and care services</li> <li>• Offering testing in comfortable and unidentified locations</li> <li>• Including HIV testing as part of comprehensive medical screenings</li> <li>• Using incentives</li> <li>• Utilizing volunteers to assist with testing and linkage activities</li> <li>• Providing linkage to continuing education and professional development opportunities for staff</li> </ul>
<b>7. Does your agency collaborate with partner organizations? If so, how are partners identified?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By partnering with organizations/agencies that provide similar services within the community</li> <li>• By utilizing existing partnerships with agencies which provide social services (i.e. job placement, housing, etc.)</li> <li>• By evaluating the impact of current partnerships</li> </ul>

**GROUP 3**

*Represented agencies:* AID Atlanta, AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta, Grady FOCUS, Positive Impact, and Southside Medical Center

<b>Question</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<p><b>8. Where are HIV testing campaigns currently located in the community?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At bus stops, mainly in Fulton and DeKalb counties</li> <li>• On MARTA trains</li> <li>• At bars (i.e. Positive Impact provides condom dispensers at local bars)</li> <li>• On websites</li> <li>• Through internal agency campaigns (i.e. Southside Medical Center’s <i>Order The Test</i> Campaign)</li> <li>• Via mobile units (AIDS Healthcare Foundation’s mobile van)</li> <li>• Via printed materials (i.e. Health fairs, African American Outreach Initiative (AAOI), AIDS Walk, churches, bars, gym, AID Atlanta’s Evolution Center.)</li> <li>• Via the HIV FOCUS Program at Grady/Southside Medical Care/St. Joseph’s Mercy Care</li> </ul>
<p><b>9. Where and how would your agency like to see HIV testing campaigns advertised in community?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public service announcements which advertise the services of local agencies/CBOs (Advertised via the radio and television)</li> <li>○ Billboards in high prevalence areas</li> <li>○ Videos placed on public transit (i.e. MARTA)</li> <li>○ At bus stops and on billboards in rural areas</li> <li>○ Marketing for private providers and hospitals</li> <li>○ Tailoring marketing strategies in order to appeal to positive individuals who are out of care</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>11. What are your agency’s suggestions for increasing community awareness about HIV testing?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through constant and consistent media campaigns</li> <li>• By creating Spanish-speaking media campaigns</li> <li>• Tailoring marketing strategies in order to appeal to positive individuals who are out of care</li> <li>• By advertising media campaigns in private healthcare settings</li> <li>• By advertising media campaigns in non-healthcare settings, for example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housing</li> <li>○ Division of Family and Children Services (DFACS)</li> <li>○ Utility assistance (i.e. the United Way and The Salvation Army)</li> <li>○ At transitional centers</li> <li>○ At churches</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ At colleges</li><li>● By advertising media campaigns in non-traditional healthcare settings, for example:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The American Diabetes Association (ADA)</li><li>○ The American Heart Association</li><li>○ Mental health organizations</li><li>○ Substance abuse organizations</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>12. How frequently does testing occur at your agency? How frequently should testing occur?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● At AID Atlanta, testing is offered Monday-Thursday</li><li>● At Positive Impact, testing is offered six days a week</li><li>● In medical settings such as GRADY ER and Southside Medical Center, testing is offered as part of a routine screening</li><li>● Testing throughout the metro Atlanta area is readily available, however agencies should work to better coordinate testing services, particularly on the weekends</li></ul>

**GROUP 4**

*Represented agencies:* AID Atlanta, AID Gwinnett, Clayton County Board of Health, and DeKalb County Board of Health

<b>Question</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<b>13. What are your agency's thoughts on the average positivity rate?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Across the state, the general expectation is that agencies achieve a 1% positivity rate. However, this rate can vary based on each agency's target population</li></ul>
<b>14. What are your successes/strategies to achieve your agency's positivity rates?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilizing social media to reach patients, for example<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Twitter</li><li>○ Facebook</li><li>○ Instagram</li><li>○ Pintrest</li><li>○ PSA</li></ul></li><li>• By using a social media recruitment strategy</li><li>• Using flyers to advertise services</li><li>• Advertising on large buildings, which are in close proximity to the agency</li></ul>
<b>15. Targeted testing may lead to higher positivity rates, what challenges does your agency anticipate/currently face?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reluctance to testing within conservative communities</li><li>• Lack of transportation for patients</li><li>• Lack of funding for advertisements</li><li>• Lack of funding to hire full time testing staff</li><li>• Adolescents ages 13 and older are unaware of their right to be tested or receive services without parental consent</li></ul>

**GROUP 5**

*Represented agencies:* AID Atlanta, Southside Medical Center, Saint Joseph's Mercy Care and Sister Love

<b>Question</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<p><b>16. What are the current challenges associated with linkage to care?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation for patients</li> <li>• Patient education</li> <li>• Co-Infections</li> <li>• Lapses in medical care</li> <li>• Transient patients</li> <li>• Patients who have disparaging attitudes towards the medical community</li> <li>• Other competing factors, such as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housing</li> <li>○ Unemployment</li> <li>○ Medical insurance</li> <li>○ Mental health</li> <li>○ Substance abuse</li> <li>○ Stigma/disclosure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>17. Describe challenges your agency encounters when collaborating with public vs. private providers?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are long waiting periods for those patients who lack insurance</li> <li>• Private care providers need more education focusing on linkage to care and retention in care</li> <li>• Locating providers who are accepting new patients</li> </ul>
<p><b>18. What can be done to address these challenges?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By hiring more patient navigators and case managers</li> <li>• By creating a portal for services and resources which is accessible to both patients and providers</li> <li>• By providing training seminars for agencies that provide HV testing and linkage services</li> <li>• Through support groups for patients</li> <li>• By sharing electronic medical information across agencies</li> </ul>

**GROUP 6**

*Represented agencies:* AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Center for Pan-Asian Community Services, Cobb & Douglas Public Health, Grady IDP, and Southside Medical Center

<b>Question</b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<b>19. How does your agency tailor testing and linkage activities in order to reach diverse populations?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By utilizing a mobile unit (AIDS Healthcare Foundation)</li><li>• Through community outreach (Center for Pan-Asian Community Services)</li></ul>
<b>20. What challenges does your agency face when tailoring your efforts?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homelessness</li><li>• Substance abuse</li><li>• Transportation for patients</li><li>• Staff's inability to maintain the paperwork that goes with HIV testing</li></ul>
<b>21. What are some of your agency's linkage to care success/strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staying connected with community resources in order to best serve populations with diverse needs (AIDS Healthcare Foundation)</li><li>• Utilizing a Medical Home Model (Southside Medical Center)</li><li>• By creating a diverse linkage to care network (Cobb &amp; Douglas Public Health)</li></ul>