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

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Feedback</th>
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| **1.** What types of data would be useful to help plan testing events? | • 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  
• Access to geospatial data, so that agencies can better plan testing and linkage activities  
• More information about the behavior and lifestyle of those populations that are at greatest risk for an HIV infection |
| **2.** How would your agency like for this information to be disseminated? | • Through a community newsletter.  
• Through social media (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, etc.) or a mobile application  
• Through in-services |
| **3.** How are testing locations identified? | • By collaborating with Partner Services to identify appropriate testing sites  
• Through GA HIV surveillance data  
• A barrier to identifying appropriate testing locations is that surveillance data is difficult to obtain from private providers |
| **4.** How does funding impact where testing takes place? | • Funding impacts agencies' abilities to provide incentives for patients, hire staff, and to provide HIV testing and Partner Services  
• Funding also determines HIV testing approaches as some funding is designated for targeted testing, while other funds are meant for routine testing |
GROUP 2

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

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| 5. What are the current challenges associated with HIV testing and counseling? | • Finding the target population  
• Establishing the right partnerships  
• Marketing  
• Stigma  
• Access to services  
• Staffing |
| 6. What is being done to address these challenges?                        | • Creating needs assessments and working with gatekeepers in order to understand and gain access to the target communities  
• Using social media to reach the community  
• Distributing flyers throughout the community to advertise testing and care services  
• Offering testing in comfortable and unidentified locations  
• Including HIV testing as part of comprehensive medical screenings  
• Using incentives  
• Utilizing volunteers to assist with testing and linkage activities  
• Providing linkage to continuing education and professional development opportunities for staff |
| 7. Does your agency collaborate with partner organizations? If so, how are partners identified? | • By partnering with organizations/agencies that provide similar services within the community  
• By utilizing existing partnerships with agencies which provide social services (i.e. job placement, housing, etc.)  
• By evaluating the impact of current partnerships |
# GROUP 3

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

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| 8. Where are HIV testing campaigns currently located in the community?   | • At bus stops, mainly in Fulton and DeKalb counties  
• On MARTA trains  
• At bars (i.e. Positive Impact provides condom dispensers at local bars)  
• On websites  
• Through internal agency campaigns (i.e. Southside Medical Center’s *Order The Test* Campaign)  
• Via mobile units (AIDS Healthcare Foundation’s mobile van)  
• Via printed materials (i.e. Health fairs, African American Outreach Initiative (AAOI), AIDS Walk, churches, bars, gym, AID Atlanta’s Evolution Center.)  
• Via the HIV FOCUS Program at Grady/Southside Medical Care/St. Joseph’s Mercy Care |
| 9. Where and how would your agency like to see HIV testing campaigns advertised in community? | • There is a need for:  
  o Public service announcements which advertise the services of local agencies/CBOs (Advertised via the radio and television)  
  o Billboards in high prevalence areas  
  o Videos placed on public transit (i.e. MARTA)  
  o At bus stops and on billboards in rural areas  
  o Marketing for private providers and hospitals  
  o Tailoring marketing strategies in order to appeal to positive individuals who are out of care |
| 11. What are your agency’s suggestions for increasing community awareness about HIV testing? | • Through constant and consistent media campaigns  
• By creating Spanish-speaking media campaigns  
• Tailoring marketing strategies in order to appeal to positive individuals who are out of care  
• By advertising media campaigns in private healthcare settings  
• By advertising media campaigns in non-healthcare settings, for example:  
  o Housing  
  o Division of Family and Children Services (DFACS)  
  o Utility assistance (i.e. the United Way and The Salvation Army)  
  o At transitional centers  
  o At churches |
| 12. How frequently does testing occur at your agency? How frequently should testing occur? | • At AID Atlanta, testing is offered Monday-Thursday  
• At Positive Impact, testing is offered six days a week  
• In medical settings such as GRADY ER and Southside Medical Center, testing is offered as part of a routine screening  
• Testing throughout the metro Atlanta area is readily available, however agencies should work to better coordinate testing services, particularly on the weekends |
|---|---|
| o At colleges  
• By advertising media campaigns in non-traditional healthcare settings, for example:  
  o The American Diabetes Association (ADA)  
  o The American Heart Association  
  o Mental health organizations  
  o Substance abuse organizations |
GROUP 4

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

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<td>13. What are your agency's thoughts on the average positivity rate?</td>
<td>• 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</td>
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| 14. What are your successes/strategies to achieve your agency's positivity rates? | • Utilizing social media to reach patients, for example  
  o Twitter  
  o Facebook  
  o Instagram  
  o Pintrest  
  o PSA  
  • By using a social media recruitment strategy  
  • Using flyers to advertise services  
  • Advertising on large buildings, which are in close proximity to the agency |
| 15. Targeted testing may lead to higher positivity rates, what challenges does your agency anticipate/currently face? | • Reluctance to testing within conservative communities  
  • Lack of transportation for patients  
  • Lack of funding for advertisements  
  • Lack of funding to hire full time testing staff  
  • Adolescents ages 13 and older are unaware of their right to be tested or receive services without parental consent |
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| 16. What are the current challenges associated with linkage to care? | • Transportation for patients  
• Patient education  
• Co-Infections  
• Lapses in medical care  
• Transient patients  
• Patients who have disparaging attitudes towards the medical community  
• Other competing factors, such as:  
  o Housing  
  o Unemployment  
  o Medical insurance  
  o Mental health  
  o Substance abuse  
  o Stigma/disclosure |
| 17. Describe challenges your agency encounters when collaborating with public vs. private providers? | • There are long waiting periods for those patients who lack insurance  
• Private care providers need more education focusing on linkage to care and retention in care  
• Locating providers who are accepting new patients |
| 18. What can be done to address these challenges? | • By hiring more patient navigators and case managers  
• By creating a portal for services and resources which is accessible to both patients and providers  
• By providing training seminars for agencies that provide HV testing and linkage services  
• Through support groups for patients  
• By sharing electronic medical information across agencies |
GROUP 6

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

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| 19. How does your agency tailor testing and linkage activities in order to reach diverse populations? | • By utilizing a mobile unit (AIDS Healthcare Foundation)  
• Through community outreach (Center for Pan-Asian Community Services) |
| 20. What challenges does your agency face when tailoring your efforts?    | • Homelessness  
• Substance abuse  
• Transportation for patients  
• Staff’s inability to maintain the paperwork that goes with HIV testing |
| 21. What are some of your agency’s linkage to care success/strategies  | • Staying connected with community resources in order to best serve populations with diverse needs (AIDS Healthcare Foundation)  
• Utilizing a Medical Home Model (Southside Medical Center)  
• By creating a diverse linkage to care network (Cobb & Douglas Public Health) |