



PROGRAM ASSISTANCE LETTER

DOCUMENT NUMBER: 2013-09

DOCUMENT NAME: HIV Testing in Health Centers – New Recommendations

DATE: July 12, 2013 (Web addresses updated on September 1, 2015.)

TO: Health Center Program Grantees
Health Center Program Look-Alikes
Primary Care Associations
Primary Care Offices
National Cooperative Agreements

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Program Assistance Letter (PAL) is to provide updated information and resources regarding the implementation of HIV testing in health centers. The National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) established a specific goal to increase the percentage of people living with HIV who are aware of their HIV infection from 79% to 90% by 2015.¹ HIV-infected individuals unaware of their status do not receive antiretroviral medications and other life-extending HIV care and treatment. HIV-positive individuals who know their status, receive HIV care and treatment, and achieve viral suppression have better health outcomes and are less likely to transmit HIV to others.^{2,3}

HIV screening is essential to reducing new HIV infections and improving health outcomes for people living with HIV. Therefore, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) strongly encourages health centers to provide HIV screening in accordance with established guidelines.

II. New U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) Recommendations

In April 2013, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) updated its 2005 recommendations for HIV screening as follows:

¹ Office of National AIDS Policy. National HIV/AIDS Strategy: Federal Implementation Plan <http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/nhas-implementation.pdf>

² Marks G, et al. Meta-analysis of high-risk sexual behavior in persons aware and unaware they are infected with HIV in the U.S. JAIDS. 2005;39:446 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16010168>

³ Cohen MS, et al. Prevention of HIV-1 Infection with Early Antiretroviral Therapy. N Engl J Med 2011; 365:493-505 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21767103>

- The USPSTF recommends that clinicians screen adolescents and adults aged 15 to 65 years for HIV infection. Younger adolescents and older adults who are at increased risk should also be screened. (Grade A recommendation)
- The USPSTF recommends that clinicians screen all pregnant women for HIV, including those who present in labor who are untested and whose HIV status is unknown. (Grade A recommendation)⁴

The USPSTF Grade A recommendation indicates a high level of certainty that this preventive service has substantial net benefit, and additionally, may alleviate financial barriers to HIV testing for health centers and their patients. Furthermore, USPSTF recommendations closely align with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for the implementation of routine HIV testing in health care settings. These CDC recommendations are described in PAL 2010-13: HIV Testing in Health-Care Settings.⁵

III. HRSA HIV Testing and Related Services Uniform Data System (UDS) Reporting

To support identification and documentation of health center success in increasing access to HIV testing and related services, the Bureau of Primary Health Care (BPHC) has proposed to add two new clinical performance measures to the Uniform Data System (UDS) required reporting for calendar year 2014, including HIV positivity rate and HIV cases with timely follow-up.⁶

IV. Key Resources

Health centers can use the resources below to learn more about guidelines for HIV screening and related services.

A. HIV Guidelines and Recommendations

- **U.S. Preventive Services Task Force**
 - *Screening for HIV – Current Recommendations*
<http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/uspshivi.htm>
 - *USPSTF A and B Recommendations* – List of preventive services with a Grade A or B
<http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/Page/Name/uspstf-a-and-b-recommendations/>
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
 - *Revised Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents, and Pregnant Women in Health-Care Settings* <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5514a1.htm>
- **AIDSinfo** – Provides information on HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention, and research
<http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/>

B. National HIV/AIDS Strategy

- **Office of National AIDS Policy** <http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/onap/nhas>
- **National HIV/AIDS Strategy Federal Implementation Plan**
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/nhas-implementation.pdf>

⁴ USPSTF. Screening for HIV: U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2013 Jul 2;159(1):51-60 <http://annals.org/article.aspx?articleid=1700660>

⁵ HRSA. Program Assistance Letter 2010-13: HIV Testing in Health-Care Settings
<http://bphc.hrsa.gov/qualityimprovement/clinicalquality/hiv-aids/pal201013.html>

⁶ HRSA. Program Assistance Letter 2013-07: Proposed Uniform Data System Changes for Calendar Year 2014

- **AIDS.gov** – Uses variety of media tools to expand visibility of Federal HIV policies, programs, and resources <http://aids.gov/>

C. HIV Training and Technical Assistance

- **National HIV/AIDS Clinicians' Consultation Center** – Provides health care providers with timely, expert and appropriate responses to clinical questions regarding the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. All consultations provided through the services listed below are free and confidential. <http://www.nccc.ucsf.edu/>
- **AIDS Education and Training Centers (AETCs) Program** – Network of national and regional centers that provide multidisciplinary training for health care providers treating people living with HIV and at risk for HIV infection, including health centers and other safety net providers. <http://hab.hrsa.gov/abouthab/parteducation.html>
- **The National LGBT Health Education Center** – Provides educational programming and consultation for health care organizations throughout the nation and the world with the goal of eliminating health disparities among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. <http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/>
- **Center for Integrated Health Solutions** – First “national home” for information, experts, and other resources dedicated to bidirectional integration of behavioral health and primary care. <http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/>
 - *Connection to Care: Substance Abuse and HIV Screening in Treatment Settings* (on-demand webinar) <http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/events/2012/11/27/connection-to-care-substance-abuse-and-hiv-screening-in-treatment-settings>
- **Health Center Program Technical Assistance**
 - *Grantee Spotlight* – New BPHC initiative to disseminate promising practices and encourage peer to peer learning across the Health Center Program <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/qualityimprovement/index.html>
 - *Making it Routine: HIV Screening at Family First Health* <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/qualityimprovement/clinicalquality/spotlight/familyfirsthiv/index.html>
 - *Promising Practices for Putting the “Routine” into HIV Testing at Health Centers* (on-demand webinar) <https://hrsa.connectsolutions.com/p51uduk5wse/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>
- **HRSA Webcasts**
 - *HRSA Grantees: Key Players in HIV Testing* (on-demand webcast; the presentation has expired) <http://services.choruscall.com/links/hrsa130624.html>
 - *30 Years of AIDS: HRSA's Commitment* (video) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPSPajvmpmw>