



# Physicians' Bulletin

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## Partner Services and HIV Incidence Surveillance: Tools for the Health Care Provider

### Introduction

Partner Services is a program that, although not new, has not been used as extensively for HIV as it has for other sexually transmitted diseases. HIV Incidence Surveillance (HIS) is a new system in California that will provide information about the newly HIV infected. Both programs are available to assist health care providers and their patients.

### Partner Services

HIV Partner Services (PS) is a free, confidential and anonymous service provided by the County of San Diego, HIV, STD and Hepatitis Branch (HSHB) of Public Health Services that assists people with HIV in notifying sex and/or needle sharing partners of a possible exposure to HIV. An estimated one in four HIV-positive individuals is unaware of their status; further transmission of HIV is most likely to occur from these unaware individuals. PS is a powerful tool to reach both unaware individuals and those at highest risk of infection, providing HIV testing and also referral to care and/or prevention services, thereby reducing the onward transmission of HIV.

There are several PS options available to assist patients with the difficult task of disclosing to a partner. Health advisors can assist by helping patients determine which option may be best for them. Anonymous/third party notification is a highly effective PS option for HIV-positive individuals who want to inform a past and/or current partner(s) of their potential exposure to HIV, but do not want to do it themselves. People living with HIV can also receive skills-building counseling on how to disclose their HIV-positive status to their current partner or receive support and assistance while disclosing.

When a new case of HIV is identified in your practice, trained public health advisors from HSHB can assist those patients by informing their sexual and/or needle sharing partners about a possible exposure to HIV. In a private setting or over the phone, public health advisors interview HIV-positive patients about recent behaviors and places where they met a partner, as well as ask the patient to share contact information about the partner. Partners who

can be located are then contacted and informed that they may have been exposed to HIV. During the notification no names or identifiers, including date or place of exposure, are revealed to the partner in order to maintain the anonymity and privacy of the original patient. The partner is offered free HIV testing and risk reduction counseling at a County of San Diego HIV testing site for rapid HIV antibody testing. If the antibody test is preliminarily positive, a confirmatory blood draw is done and referrals to medical care are made. If appropriate, STD screening, referrals to substance use, and mental health programs are offered.

As a medical provider treating people living with HIV, you can help stop the transmission of HIV by talking about PS with your patients. By doing so, you will play a vital role in helping people with undiagnosed HIV learn of their infection status and access care and treatment. Letting people know of their possible HIV infection is both good medicine and sound public health practice.

For more information or to make a referral, please call (619) 692-8501 and ask to speak with a health advisor.

### HIV Incidence Surveillance

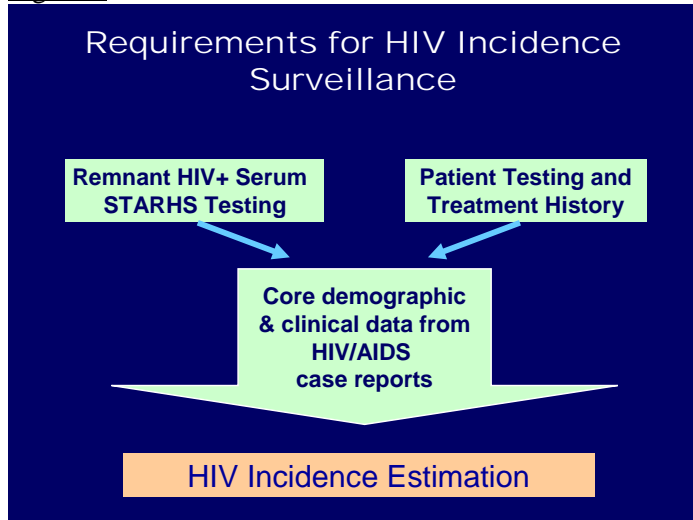
#### *What is HIV Incidence Surveillance (HIS)?*

Developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and recently launched in California, HIS is a system designed to estimate the number of new HIV infections per year. Since it is not uncommon for people to be diagnosed with HIV long after they are infected, current surveillance systems do not allow for good estimates of new infections either at the state or local level. Understanding more about new HIV infections helps to target prevention, treatment, and care efforts to those most affected by the epidemic.

HIS uses the Serologic Testing Algorithm for Recent HIV Seroconversion (STARHS) to distinguish between recent and long-term infections. STARHS results indicating probable recent infection are statistically weighted using patient HIV testing and treatment history to estimate the number of new HIV infections in the population. These estimates help to monitor trends in HIV transmission, target prevention

resources to populations most heavily affected, and evaluate HIV prevention programs, nationwide, statewide, and at the local level (Figure 1).

Figure 1



**How will this affect the health care provider?**

The health care provider is being asked to collect a small amount of testing and treatment history for newly diagnosed patients (confirmed by Western Blot or IFA only). Patients benefit from this additional work by having programs available that are better targeted to emerging risk groups. Health care providers benefit by having a greater understanding of the epidemic, which leads to better outcomes for patients. For example, if HIS data demonstrated significantly higher rates of new infections among a group not previously recognized to be

at risk, prevention, care, and treatment resources could be made available to address the needs of this group more rapidly. Similarly, informed providers could encourage HIV testing, discuss prevention strategies, and make appropriate referrals for this demographic.

**How to Report**

The HIS Surveillance Information form can be found on page two of this bulletin. The form is half a page and includes a few questions about the frequency of patient testing and recent antiretroviral use. An electronic HIS fill-in form can be found on the County of San Diego HIV/AIDS Epidemiology website ([www.sdhivaid.org](http://www.sdhivaid.org)), under the Health Care Provider Toolkit bullet. Local surveillance staff can collect the HIS information during arranged visits or the form can be sent with completed HIV case reports to:

Michael Bursaw, MPH  
 County of San Diego, Epidemiology Program  
 1700 Pacific Hwy, Rm. 107, MS: P577  
 San Diego, CA 92101

Routine HIV case surveillance does not provide an accurate picture of new HIV infections. HIS fills this gap with the help of the health care provider. For more information, call 619-515-6672.

**Quick Link**

CDPH/OA HIS Homepage:  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/aids/Pages/OAHISHome.aspx>

**HIV Incidence Surveillance Information**

Stateno \_\_\_\_\_ (Stateno completed by Health Dept)

This short form can be attached to the HIV/AIDS Case Report Form used for routine HIV reporting. You may enter patient-reported answers to the past testing behaviors and the dates of these tests. If the patient received medication to treat or prevent HIV or hepatitis B, please enter medication names and start/end dates, as applicable. Answers to these questions will help the California Department of Health, Office of AIDS (OA) with HIV Incidence Surveillance (HIS).

Date question answered by patient ____/____/____	Antiretroviral & Prophylaxis Treatment History
Date of <u>first positive</u> HIV test reported by patient (mm/dd/yy) ____/____/____	Used ARV (e.g., to prevent/treat HIV or HepB) in the last six months? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No  First date of ARV use: (mm/dd/yy) ____/____/____
Date of <u>last negative</u> HIV test reported by patient (mm/dd/yy) ____/____/____  <input type="checkbox"/> Check if never had a negative HIV test	Last date of ARV use: (mm/dd/yy) ____/____/____  If yes, list medications: _____ _____
Prior tests (2 years before 1 <sup>st</sup> positive)  Number of HIV tests in 2 years before first positive:  _1_ (first positive) + ____ (# prior negative tests) = ____ Total	_____ _____ _____

**Reporting Assistance**

- HIV or AIDS
  - County of San Diego HIV/AIDS Surveillance Unit of the Epidemiology Program
    - (619) 515-6675
    - [www.sdhivaids.org](http://www.sdhivaids.org)
- STD
  - HIV, STD, and Hepatitis Branch
    - (619) 692-8501
    - [www.stdsandiego.com](http://www.stdsandiego.com)
    - [www.stdcheckup.org](http://www.stdcheckup.org)

**Resources**

***New!* Partner Services website**

[www.discloseyourstatus.com](http://www.discloseyourstatus.com)

**STD partner notification by email**

[www.inspot.org](http://www.inspot.org)

**HIV Counseling and Testing Info Line**

(619) 296-2120

**STD Clinic, County Health Services Complex, Info Line**

(619) 692-8550

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention)**

[www.cdc.gov/hiv](http://www.cdc.gov/hiv)

If you would prefer to receive electronic copies of future *Physicians' Bulletins*, please call 619-515-6675 or email [Lorri.Freitas@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Lorri.Freitas@sdcounty.ca.gov).

The *Physicians' Bulletin* is published on an as-needed basis by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency to provide updated information on health issues of concern to San Diego's medical community

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