August 24, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

In support of efforts to End the AIDS epidemic by the end of 2020, New York State’s public health response continuously evolves. I am writing to inform you of the most recent developments in the State’s HIV prevention programming that will likely impact you. A summary of these enhanced efforts is below.

**Expanded Partner Services (ExPS)**
A statewide initiative that began in 2015, ExPS utilizes a CDC endorsed High-Impact Prevention Strategy (Data to Care) to locate and re-engage individuals with diagnosed HIV infection in HIV-related medical care. More specifically, health department data is used to identify individuals diagnosed with HIV who may be out of care. Specially trained Partner Services staff working for the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) or a County Health Department contact the last known medical provider as the initial step in their out of care investigation. The clinician is critical in determining the best Partner Services approach for the patient, including learning about care status, treatment information, locating information, and to discuss any concerns the clinician may have regarding the patient.

While New York has had success in relinking people to care—only 67% (635) of confirmed out of care individuals were relinked as of June 2018—more work is needed to meet the out of care relinkage goal of 75%.

**Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Navigation**
Through patient interviews and exposure notifications, Partner Services staff are uniquely positioned to facilitate access to PrEP. Health Department Partner Services staff actively refer to clinicians offering PrEP, HIV status unknown or negative persons with syphilis, sexual partners of persons with syphilis, and sexual partners or social contacts of persons with HIV. Furthermore, a PrEP referral is suggested for patients with rectal gonorrhea or Chlamydia, their exposed partners, persons with a recent history of multiple sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or persons who report unprotected anal sex, injection drug use, or sex work. If you offer PrEP services and would like to be included in the NYSDOH AIDS Institute Provider Directory, please navigate to [https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/) and click on “Access the NEW AIDS Institute Provider Directory.”
**HIV Transmission Clusters**

A new HIV/STI prevention approach involves the NYSDOH’s efforts to identify and intervene in rapidly growing HIV transmission clusters with the goal of preventing further transmission. Clusters are identified through several methods, including focused analysis of HIV surveillance data, Health Department Partner Services data, and through reported observations from astute clinicians. Health Department Partner Services staff implement individual level interventions, including re-interviews of newly and previously diagnosed persons to identify individuals in a transmission cluster risk network and ensure they and their partners or social contacts are linked to HIV and STI testing, medical care, PrEP, and other prevention services.

HIV reporting by health care providers represents an essential source of information for the efforts to End the Epidemic. Clinician reporting via the HIV/AIDS Provider Portal enables health care providers to: 1) meet their reporting requirements electronically; 2) notify the NYSDOH that a patient needs linkage to Health Department Partner Services; and, 3) submit inquiries for patients with diagnosed HIV infection who are thought to be out of care. The HIV/AIDS Provider Portal is accessed through the NYSDOH Health Commerce System ([https://commerce.health.state.ny.us](https://commerce.health.state.ny.us)). For more information on HIV Testing and Reporting in New York State, please navigate to: [https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/testing/docs/testing_fact_sheet.pdf](https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/aids/providers/testing/docs/testing_fact_sheet.pdf).

We encourage your cooperation with HIV and STI prevention efforts in your area. Should you have any questions regarding Health Department Partner Services or this correspondence, please email ps@health.ny.gov and a NYSDOH staff will reply to your message.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

James M. Tesoriero, Ph.D.
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NYS Department of Health, AIDS Institute