STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LINKAGE TO CARE

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Learning Objectives

• Define Linkage to Care

• Identify elements of a Linkage to Care program for HIV-positive people
What is Linkage to Care?

Health Care System Navigation

HIV Medical Care

Behavioral Health Services

Partner Notification
Benefits of HIV Medical Care

• Individual
  – Viral suppression
  – Improved health and increased longevity
  – Reduced chance of HIV transmission to sexual and injection partners

• Community
  – Lower community viral load
  – Fewer new infections
  – Reduced health care costs
HIV Care Continuum

HIV Care Continuum Shows Where Improvements are Needed

In the US, 1.2 million people are living with HIV. Of those:

- **DIAGNOSED**: 86%
- **ENGAGED IN CARE**: 40%
- **PRESCRIBED ART***: 37%
- **VIRALLY SUPPRESSED**: 30%

*SOURCES: CDC National HIV Surveillance System and Medical Monitoring Project, 2011.*
Achieving Viral Suppression: More People with HIV Need to be in Medical Care

- 30% Virally suppressed
- 70% Not virally suppressed
- 66% Diagnosed but not in care
- 4% In care but not on ART*
- 10% On ART but not virally suppressed
- 20% Not diagnosed


*Antiretroviral therapy
Barriers to Engagement in Care

- Cost: Health care, prescriptions, transportation, lost wages
- Access: provider availability and quality, linguistic and cultural appropriateness, location
- Stigma and Discrimination: HIV status, sexual or drug-related activity, membership in a marginalized group
- Medication Concerns: Side effects, drug interactions
- Other Health Conditions: Mental health, substance use, violence or other trauma
Elements of Successful Linkage to Care
Referral vs. Linkage vs. Navigation

• Referral: Provide client with information about referral services

• Linkage: Ensure that client successfully accesses referral services

• Navigation: Offer support for ongoing engagement in referral services
Elements of Successful Linkage to Care

• Assess client’s needs and help them identify and prioritize referrals
• Assist in making a plan of when and how to access services
• Facilitate access to services by assisting client with overcoming barriers
• Confirm and document linkage
Assess and Prioritize Referral Needs

• Consider the factors that may influence the client’s willingness and ability to connect to HIV care

• Help client determine referral priorities

• Among the client’s priorities, focus on referrals that have the greatest impact on client’s health
Plan the Referral

• Help client plan for when and how they will access HIV care

• Identify strategies to overcome potential barriers
Facilitate Access to Services

- Navigate client through health care systems
- Connect client to psychosocial and other support
- Assist client with logistics required to access services
Confirm and Document Linkage

• Inform client of intent to follow up on their progress
• Use release of information forms to obtain information from provider
• Ask for feedback from the client on their experience
• Document interaction as required
Building Agency Capacity for Successful Linkage to Care
Building Agency Capacity for Successful Linkage to Care

• Assess referral and linkage needs of client population
• Assess existing agency resources
• Identify referral and linkage partners
• Establish referral and linkage partnerships
• Operationalize partnerships
Assess Referral and Linkage Needs

• Identify priority population(s)
• Request input from key stakeholders on which factors promote, and which barriers prevent, successful linkage to care
Assess Agency Capacity

• Identify existing expertise and human resources

• Seek out professional development or recruit additional support as needed

• Create a plan for ongoing staff training and evaluation
Identify Referral and Linkage Partners

• Research local providers to address population needs

• Compile information on a range of standards, including quality of care, accessibility, cultural appropriateness, and client satisfaction
Establish Partnerships

• Conduct outreach to referral providers
• Assess provider willingness and ability to accept referrals and participate in monitoring
• Select providers with capacity and cultural competency to address needs of priority population(s)
Operationalize Partnerships

• Establish expectations and responsibilities for each referral partner

• Create policies and procedures for all linkage activities

• Identify point people who can help address issues as they arise

• Formalize key partnerships with written agreements
Effective Interventions and Best Practices
Linkage to Care Strategies

- Antiretroviral Treatment and Access to Services (ARTAS)
- HIV Navigation Services (HNS)
- Linkage Case Management
- Medical Case Management
- Outreach and Peer Support
Anti-Retroviral Treatment and Access to Services (ARTAS)

- Engages people recently diagnosed with HIV
- Employs individual-level, multi-session, time-limited intervention
- Encourages client to identify and use personal strengths, create specific goals, and establish an effective working relationship with linkage counselor

UCSF Capacity Building Assistance Partnership
Making high-impact HIV prevention possible! cba.ucsf.edu
Center for AIDS Prevention Studies ■ Center of Excellence for Transgender Health ■ Alliance Health Project

A Member of the CPN
BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE NATION’S HIV PREVENTION WORKFORCE
Funded by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Priority Populations
Young MSM of Color

• Disproportionately high rates of HIV
• Lower rates of testing and status awareness
• Less likely to engage in regular HIV-related health care
Linkage to Care for Young MSM of Color

• Respectful and positive provider relationship
• Low threshold for accessing services
• Assertive logistical support, warm hand off
• Youth-specific activities
• Assistance with competing health priorities
Additional Resources to Serve Young MSM of Color

• Special Projects of National Significance Young MSM of Color Initiative

• Addressing Stigma: A Blueprint for Improving HIV/STD Prevention and Care Outcomes for Black & Latino Gay Men

• The Adaptation Guide: Adapting HIV Behavior Change Interventions for Gay and Bisexual Latino and Black Men

• Best Practices in HIV Prevention: Translating Innovation into Action
Transgender Women

• Disproportionately high rates of HIV

• Lower rates of testing and status awareness

• Less likely to engage in regular HIV-related health care
Linkage to Care for Transgender Women

• Importance of gender affirmation
• Integration of hormone and antiretroviral therapies
• Assistance with competing health priorities
• Peer support
Additional Resources to Serve Transgender Women

- Barriers and facilitators to engagement and retention in care among transgender women living with human immunodeficiency virus
- Special Projects of National Significance Enhancing Engagement and Retention in Quality HIV Care for Transgender Women of Color
- National Transgender HIV Testing Day Toolkit
- Guidelines for the Primary and Gender-Affirming Care of Transgender and Gender Nonbinary People
- Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People Best Practices for Front-line Health Care Staff