

TRANS HIV TESTING TOOLKIT

MODULE 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND NATIONAL
TRANSGENDER HIV TESTING DAY



"A community-led outreach program supports the success of the HIV testing campaign. This outcome can be achieved by allowing trans people to become leaders in implementing outreach strategies and by doing so, it creates a strong foundation that increases the accessibility and acceptability of the HIV testing services."

As discussed in previous modules, engaging trans people in HIV testing can be challenging but also dynamic and deeply appreciated by an underserved community. Understanding where trans people are and how to reach them is essential. A community-led outreach program supports the success of the HIV testing campaign. This outcome can be achieved by allowing trans people to become leaders in implementing outreach strategies and by doing so, it creates a strong foundation that increases the accessibility and acceptability of the HIV testing services.

In this module, HIV outreach strategies (street, venue-based, social media, peer-based, and mobile testing) for engaging trans people in HIV testing and prevention activities are presented. Note that these strategies can be implemented individually or in any appropriate combination.

Additional information regarding participation in the National Transgender HIV Testing Day (NTHTD) is discussed:

- Recommendations on how to create a trans-specific resource guide that reflects local geographic area
- How to be an NTHTD partner by registering your HIV testing site, event and services on Center of Excellence for Transgender Health (CoE) website (transhealth.ucsf.edu)
- Considerations after hosting the NTHTD campaign

“Community outreach can be tailored to trans people’s needs and the specific aims of the engagement strategies (e.g., recruitment to inform individuals about HIV testing services provided elsewhere, or to offer HIV testing on-site). Involving the local trans communities and other key stakeholders in the initial planning of the HIV testing campaign is crucial to the success of the testing program.”

I. HIV TESTING ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH WITH TRANS PEOPLE

One of the ways to engage participants in HIV testing programs is through community-led outreach. Community outreach can be tailored to trans people’s needs and the specific aims of the engagement strategies (e.g., recruitment to inform individuals about HIV testing services provided elsewhere, or to offer HIV testing on-site). Involving the local trans communities and other key stakeholders in the initial planning of the HIV testing campaign is crucial to the success of the testing program.

Traditionally, outreach involves going to where the community “hangs out” and informing them of HIV testing and prevention services. As mentioned in the introduction, outreach strategies can be implemented in many ways such as street, venue-based, social media, and the utilization of peers. Each of these methods has benefits and challenges in terms of resources, time, and staffing.

Here are general recommendations to be considered when implementing community-led outreach strategies:

- Build a strong relationship with the local trans communities by hiring a trans person or partnering with local trans organization;
- Define clear outreach goals (be realistic), develop implementation plans and create an ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the strategies. Make adjustments if necessary;
- Provide basic training to all outreach staff and include competency in understanding gender and sexual diversity, knowledge of a range of trans issues (both health and non-health related) and interpersonal communication skills;
- Develop policies to ensure that there is adequate measure to obtain client consent and that there is no breach of confidentiality;
- Create and provide gender affirming health education outreach materials and HIV prevention tools (condoms, lube, HIV testing information, etc.). See the NTHTD and Toolkit Resources section for gender affirming health education material links;
- Offer lists of trans affirming community resources (food, shelters, showers);
- Provide participant incentives to encourage continuous participation;
- Develop a well thought-out plan handling emergency situations; create a list of emergency contacts and create a buddy system if necessary.

Community-led Outreach Strategies

Peer-Based – is an outreach strategy that utilizes trans peers to implement outreach plans and disseminate accurate information that encourages activities promoting HIV testing.



Peer based outreach is an effective strategy because of the high degree of interpersonal contact. It is important to involve trans people that reflect the culture and lived experiences of the community being served. Trans peers are encouraged to be involved in leadership roles in HIV testing and prevention programs and be willing to provide support to their peers. Select peers that are well known and trusted in the community, work as catalyst to empower community members to engage in HIV testing and prevention services.

PEER-BASED OUTREACH	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interpersonal connection ▪ Peer Modeling ▪ Social support ▪ Mutual benefit ▪ Community empowerment ▪ Reinforces follow-up to HIV testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential for gossip about HIV status among peers ▪ Peer availability ▪ On-going peer support ▪ Structural and institutional support

Additional considerations when implementing peer-based outreach strategies:

- Cultivate trusting and supportive relationships among trans peers
- Be mindful of the values and norms of the local trans communities

Street – a strategy where outreach members provide health information, handouts, and safer sex supplies to places where trans people congregate.

Many trans women congregate in areas where some agency staff may not be familiar. It is important to consider staff safety and also client safety when engaging potential testing participants in areas where sex work is common. It is recommended that staff get to know the area prior to conducting HIV testing outreach and identify a local gatekeeper within the community. Building a relationship with local businesses and non-trans organizations near outreach location can provide additional familiarity of the area.

Outreach conducted on the streets can make trans people vulnerable by being identified publically as a high risk individual or engaging in sex work. Prioritizing client safety establishes trust and credibility among community members. It is also encouraged to inform law enforcement that agency staff will be conducting HIV testing and outreach in their area. Outreach and testing staff benefits from continuous support and training in dealing with people and situations that might interfere with HIV testing and prevention services.



STREET OUTREACH	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personable ▪ Can build on-going client relationship ▪ More responsive ▪ More accessible ▪ Hard to reach populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential for gossip about HIV status among peers ▪ Staff and client safety ▪ Costly ▪ Time consuming ▪ Familiarity with the location and street culture

Additional considerations when implementing street-outreach strategy:

- Conduct an assessment of the neighborhood including stakeholders, gatekeepers and commerce;
- Know the local law enforcement personnel to gain support; and
- Ensure that outreach workers utilize a buddy system.

Venue-Based - is an outreach strategy that focuses on venues and physical spaces where trans people congregate such as bars, clubs, and community centers.

Popular places that trans people tend to gather are local bars and nightclubs. These local venues can be trans-specific or known to cater to a general population. Getting to know these establishments and input from community members will inform outreach and engagement events in these sites.

Additional venues can include local support groups, place of worship groups, or other places that are known to staff as being trans community social spaces. It's important to establish relationship with venue management/organizers. Venue based engagement services will ensure your agency is visible to the community and are invested in engaging trans community members in HIV testing.

VENUE-BASED OUTREACH	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personable ▪ More responsive ▪ Larger segments of community ▪ Increased visibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal information such as HIV status or sexual partners may be "outed" by association. ▪ Resources (increased staffing) ▪ Only reach those who are able to go out ▪ Community or partnership buy-in

Additional considerations when implementing venue-based outreach strategy:

- Identify venues based on trans community input;
- Assess for appropriateness of HIV outreach site; and

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- Establish relationship with venue (management, staff, and patrons) to gain permission to conduct on-site testing and distribute health information and other HIV prevention materials.

Online and social media – utilizing online and social media such as FaceBook, Twitter, Instagram, Craigslist, texting, on-line chat, and dating sites to disseminate outreach information.

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ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Available 24/7 ▪ Social network learning ▪ Privacy ▪ In the moment ▪ Targets a larger audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsiveness ▪ Access to and familiarity with technology ▪ Some social media is not trans specific ▪ Tracking/evaluation of effectiveness

Additional considerations when implementing online and social-media outreach strategy:

- Utilize social media hash tags to create social awareness and increase communication on subject matter (e.g., #TransHIV);
- Create an online presence by developing a community informed resource page (e.g., Facebook Groups, listservs, etc.); and
- Make sure the information stays current and more importantly, that the resources you are providing are trans specific.

To learn more about best practices in utilizing social media, check-out [CDC’s The Health Communicator’s Social Media Toolkit](#).

Mobile Testing - utilizes a testing vehicle at designated trans community sites. Mobile testing provides an option to individuals who are not comfortable accessing agency testing sites.

If resources allow it, you may bring a mobile testing unit to facilitate testing for participants. Some trans women may not feel comfortable going to community-based organizations (CBOs) for testing due to stigma and/or convenience. Some stigma may be associated with HIV or transphobia since most agencies serving trans people also serve men who have sex with men (MSM). Historically, trans women have been categorized with MSM resulting in services not being culturally appropriate.

“If your agency has the capacity to conduct mobile HIV testing in locations where trans community members congregate, make sure to park in an area that is safe and well lit, accessible and private enough for people to approach the testing unit to access HIV testing services.”

To learn more about HIV related stigma, see Module 1: Get the Facts about Trans People and HIV of this toolkit.

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MOBILE TESTING	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Convenience▪ Time, day, location versatility▪ Responsive to community needs▪ Accesses hard-to-reach trans groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Personal information (HIV status, sexual partners) may be “outed” by association▪ Resources▪ Costly▪ Safety

Additional considerations when implementing mobile testing strategy:

- Familiarize with public parking to minimize traffic obstructions;
- Inform local law enforcement about mobile HIV testing activities and acquire permits if necessary; and
- Schedule testing hours that reflects the needs of the community.



II. ORGANIZE A NATIONAL TRANSGENDER HIV TESTING DAY FOR YOUR CBO

The CoE is taking leadership in organizing the inaugural NTHTD. Local CBOs are encouraged to develop their own HIV testing campaign on this day targeting trans communities. By registering on CoE website, CBOs can partner with CoE and other CBOs to promote trans HIV testing and prevention services on a national scale for the April 18th NTHTD.

Steps to create a successful trans HIV testing campaign or event:

- 1. Hire a trans person and/or partner with local members of the trans communities.** First step is to partner with trans people in planning and hosting the event and whenever possible, hire a trans person to be a part of your team. Key members or leaders in your local trans community can help train your staff to sensitive issues and help your event be welcoming, respectful, sensitive and well informed.
- 2. Set goals for your event.** Define what your organization wants to accomplish. If your organization does not have the capacity for HIV testing, see the following *Ideas for events* section. Develop key take home messages to emphasize during your event using the national theme.
- 3. Engaging in your local traditional partners** such as faith-based organizations, universities, schools and other CBOs are encouraged. However, these traditional partners must be sensitive to the issues and needs of the trans community. These traditional partners must have an institutionalized *non-discrimination* policy and be welcoming, respectful and supportive of the trans community.
- 4. Trans specific promotional and educational materials.** Include the NTHTD promotional materials in your outreach materials. The images and language portrayed in your promotional materials should reflect the community you wish to serve. Inclusivity of the trans people in these materials is paramount in engagement of the trans community.
- 5. Understand the epidemiology of HIV in the trans community.** Studies show a high prevalence rate of HIV in the trans community. Know the incidence and prevalence rate of HIV in your local trans community (if available). It is important to remember that although your local trans organization or the Department of Public Health may have local prevalence rates of trans living with HIV, the numbers reported are likely an underestimate when taking into account fear of disclosure, fear of HIV testing, refusal of care and a single question data collection method on gender.



6. **Utilize the** NTHTD and Toolkit Resources **section provided in this toolkit.** The [Center of Excellence for Transgender Health \(CoE\)](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [HIV](#) and [Act Against AIDS campaign websites](#), and [AIDS.gov](#) have useful tools, such as fact sheets, graphics, posters, and more.
7. **Capacity building assistance (CBA).** The CoE has a CBA project specific to trans focused interventions. The CBA Project provides trainings, capacity building, and technical assistance throughout the United States to promote knowledgeable, sensitive, and effective HIV/AIDS prevention for diverse trans communities, particularly trans communities of color. The goal of the CBA project is to increase the capacity of CDC-funded CBOs to adapt, implement, and evaluate evidence-based HIV prevention interventions for trans communities. For more information about CBA services from the CoE visit us at <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/> or access CBA through the UCSF CBA Partnership Team: <http://cba.ucsf.edu/>

*CBA Project is funded by CDC.
8. **Register your event or HIV testing campaign on the** [CoE website](#)

Questions your organization may consider:

- What resources, skills and knowledge does your organization already have to plan an event and help bring awareness to those most at risk in your area?
- Who and where are the trans community and trans leaders in your area? Can you enlist their help?
- How can the trans community and leaders help plan an event with your organization to assist those most at risk for HIV?
- How can you engage local media? Can they attend the event? Can you hold news conferences; submit an editorial or public service announcement?
- How can social media help promote your event? Does your organization have a Facebook page or twitter account?
- How can your local businesses, faith institutions, universities and schools help? Are they sensitive and non-discriminatory towards trans women and men?



III. IDEAS FOR SPECIFIC EVENTS TO TRANS HIV TESTING AWARENESS DAY

Providing HIV testing services for trans people on NTHTD is not the only way to contribute to the NTHTD. Providers and community advocates are encouraged to host community engagement events that promote HIV testing and status awareness among trans people.

- Hold public forums about the impact of HIV/AIDS on your local trans community. If no local data are available, request the information from your local health department. If the health department does not have access to this information other information on trans data may be accessed through [CDC](#). You may additionally have a panel of trans women and trans men speak at this forum on how HIV impacts their health and affects their community.
- Invite a local celebrity or elected official to the forum. You may additionally ask your local official to send a letter or memo to all city employees to recognize this day.
- Collaborate with other CBOs to organize a health fair focusing on trans health. Ask community members or organizations from your local community to talk about HIV prevention services for the trans community. Highlight education about HIV testing options and other issues of HIV/AIDS impacting the trans community.
- Have a fundraiser event to benefit the trans community directly and offer HIV testing services at the event if your agency has the capacity or invite a mobile van to deliver HIV counseling and testing services while potential testing participants attend this event. Have local businesses and advocacy groups sponsor your event.
- Hold a movie/television watching night focusing on trans actors and actresses or trans specific issues. HIV testing services may be offered during the movie reception.
- Hold contests where the trans community develops posters or other promotional HIV prevention materials for your organization to use at future events.



IV. CONSIDERATIONS AFTER YOUR NATIONAL TRANSGENDER HIV TESTING DAY CAMPAIGN

In order to continue to engage trans people in HIV testing services and encourage them to know their status, here are some considerations after the NTHTD campaign:

- **Appreciation:** Thank those who helped plan, contribute, and attend the event.
- **Feedback:** Ask organizers and participants after the event for feedback to improve next year's event.
- **Self-evaluation:** Have your staff do a self-evaluation on the event. Measure the outcome of your event against the goals that were set.
- **Media:** Engage with local media both during and after your local event to report on the Day's events.
- **On-going services:** Continue to provide services, meetings, forums and educational groups throughout the year to the trans community. Continue to provide trans cultural sensitivity training to your staff.

Create your local trans community resource guide including HIV testing services. The purpose of this community resource guide is to highlight local, regional and state trans community services that are specific to trans HIV testing and prevention needs.

1. Identify community and state resources. Compile a list that includes what resources and services they provide, their physical locations and their contact numbers.
2. Identify the key groups within the trans community who can be considered as a resource. Engage your local community to help identify and involve key leaders in the trans community.
3. Specific resources should reflect the needs of trans people, with the idea that in obtaining resources, trans people will also receive information about HIV testing and prevention services. For example, a resource may provide pro-bono law services or have an understanding of specific issue that the trans person may face in getting their name and or gender mark changed, their driver's license updated or simply finding support.
4. Check the following for resources that have non-discriminatory policies and preferably are trans specific:



- a. State or city institutions
 - Department of public health
 - Universities or local schools
 - Local hospitals or health clinics
 - Medical facilities
 - Law enforcement agencies
 - b. Community-based organizations
 - Victim services for trans people
 - Advocacy groups for trans people
 - Food kitchens and distribution centers
 - Housing organizations
 - Mental health services
 - Emergency housing shelters, halfway houses, substance abuse homes
 - Legal services for trans people
 - c. Private sector
 - Local businesses who are supporters of the trans community
5. Make sure the resource list is current and updated. Add new resources as you and your organization become aware of them. Delete the ones that have become obsolete.