

TRANS HIV TESTING TOOLKIT

OVERVIEW: NATIONAL TRANSGENDER HIV TESTING DAY



“HIV testing is an effective prevention tool that can actively engage trans people in their sexual health and wellness while empowering them to make health choices that improve their lives.”

NATIONAL TRANSGENDER HIV TESTING DAY - OVERVIEW

April 18, 2016 marked the inaugural National Transgender HIV Testing Day (NTHTD). NTHTD is a day set aside to recognize the importance of HIV testing and continued focus on HIV prevention and treatment efforts among trans people. In particular, trans women of color have disproportionately high HIV prevalence and less access to culturally competent care. HIV testing is an effective prevention tool that can actively engage trans people in their sexual health and wellness while empowering them to make health choices that improve their lives. HIV testing also allows health care providers to identify those who are HIV positive and to start treatment efforts sooner.

The goals of the NTHTD Initiative are:

- To increase status awareness among all trans and gender non-binary people;
- To increase the capacity of local health jurisdictions, community-based organizations (CBOs), and partners to meet the HIV testing, prevention, and treatment needs of trans people;
- To reduce HIV and other health related disparities experienced by trans women, with specific focus on trans women of color; and
- To increase community engagement of trans people in HIV testing, planning, prevention, and care services throughout the United States.

The term gender identity refers to a person’s basic innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. The term transgender refers to people whose gender identity does not conform to a binary classification of gender based on their sex assigned at birth. Transgender includes gender non-binary people, who self-identify as, for instance, transgender women; transgender men; two-spirit; and people who self-identify simply as women or men.¹ Throughout the document “trans” is used as an abbreviation for “transgender.”

Discrimination, stigma, social isolation, and bias among health and social service providers contribute to increased substance use and other known drivers of HIV among trans and gender non-binary people. The rate of HIV infection among trans women is higher than other most at-risk groups, such as men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, and sex workers; yet most tracking systems do not systematically record data on trans people.² Epidemiological data show that trans women of color are disproportionately affected by HIV and reveal greater health disparities when compared with other key affected populations.

“With this toolkit, the CoE encourages CBOs and prevention programs to host trans HIV testing community events, develop trans HIV testing visibility campaigns, provide HIV testing services, and/or engage trans community members in promoting status awareness among all trans people.”

As part of the NTHTD initiative, the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health (CoE) developed a Transgender HIV testing toolkit that reflects the most current HIV prevention research, and best practices for serving trans and gender non-binary people. Guidelines to increase access and trans cultural competence among HIV testing programs and services are included. With this toolkit, the CoE encourages CBOs and prevention programs to host trans HIV testing community events, develop trans HIV testing visibility campaigns, provide HIV testing services, and/or engage trans community members in promoting status awareness among all trans people.

The CoE adapted the Transgender HIV/AIDS Health Services Best Practices guide (developed by the CoE in partnership with the San Francisco Department of Public Health) to address HIV testing best practices for the trans community. This adaptation addresses the fact that HIV testing is a health service that many CBOs strive to improve among populations most affected by HIV. While the best practices document focuses on care, the toolkit highlights testing as part of care continuum for trans populations. This toolkit also includes the CoE National Advisory Board’s input to be more inclusive of regional differences specifically addressing the needs of the epidemic as experienced by CBOs and providers across the country.

There are resources listed at the end of the toolkit that CBOs may share with trans people, utilize in the day-to-day office operations, or work towards increasing visibility and acceptance of trans people in the United States. The CoE is a member of the UCSF Capacity Building Assistance (CBA) partnership, a member of the CBA Provider Network (CPN). CoE CBA offers free trainings, capacity building, and technical assistance throughout the United States to promote knowledgeable, sensitive, and effective HIV/AIDS prevention service for trans communities, particularly trans women of color.

¹ HIV Among Transgender People. (2015, April 15). Retrieved December 1, 2015, from <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/gender/transgender/>

² UNAIDS. Global report: UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic 2012. http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20121120_UNAIDS_Global_Report_2012_with_annexes_en_1.pdf. Published November 2012. Accessed February 2014.