
[Date]

Dear Colleague:

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is assessing a group of associated HIV cases among [gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), people who inject drugs (PWID)] in [County A]. HIV data reported to DSHS show:

* The total number of new HIV diagnoses in the state have been stable in recent years with roughly X reported diagnoses of HIV annually.
* However, an analysis of lab data shows a group of related cases among [gay, bisexual, and other MSM, PWID] in [City/County A], which indicates that HIV transmission could be occurring faster than would be expected for this area.
* The lab data show there are at least X associated cases, although there may be other cases that have not yet been identified.

The group of associated cases was identified as part of regular DSHS monitoring of HIV data, which is a routine part of public health work.

Through public health follow-up interviews, re-testing, linkage to care, and further analysis, health officials hope to identify whether additional associated cases exist. This will allow public health officials to better understand the factors that may be contributing to HIV transmission and attempt to determine whether others are vulnerable. Using this information, officials can work to ensure that people who are impacted have access to HIV care, treatment and prevention services, and can determine if additional response measures are needed.

Officials have recommended the following actions be taken in [City/County A] to diagnose additional people living with HIV (PLWH) and to reduce further transmission:

* Conduct a complete sexual and drug use history for all (gay, bisexual, MSM, PWID), as part of routine public health follow-up. This includes information about specific behaviors, such as number of partners, types of sex (i.e., vaginal, anal, oral), sex and gender identity of partners, drugs used, and mode of drug delivery.
* Identify client needs and offer testing for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and other services to [gay, bisexual, and other MSM, PWID] who do not access health care or who may not take advantage of HIV and STD testing in clinical settings.
* Assist all PLWH and [gay, bisexual, and other MSM, PWID] with accessing medical, prevention, and support services.
* Implement effective prevention activities and focus those activities to populations and geographic areas identified in this cluster.
* Explore new and innovative intervention strategies such as using dating apps to reach the affected population for focused prevention messaging or to promote testing.
* Conduct testing using the [recommended laboratory HIV testing algorithm](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/guidelines_testing_recommendedlabtestingalgorithm.pdf) and continue to monitor HIV infections through CD4 and viral load testing.
* Report HIV and STD cases to the local health department using the protocol found here: [dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/reporting/](https://www.dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/reporting/).
* Contact [your local health authority](https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd/reporting/regions/) or email TBHIVSTDdata@dshs.texas.gov to report suspected clusters of recent HIV or Hepatitis C cases.

DSHS recognizes all the work you do to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. We appreciate your attention to this important public health issue and look forward to supporting you now and in the future.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[Health Department Name]