

Confidential HIV testing policy

Starting this month, all HIV testing conducted using funds from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) HIV Prevention Program must be conducted confidentially. This policy already is in place in 12 other states and territories. Anonymous HIV testing will remain available to any person who purchases a home test or who tests at an agency that offers anonymous testing using other funding sources.

Confidential HIV testing supports the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. Public health agencies are better able to ensure clients receive their HIV test results and access care and Partner Services if they have access to client names and contact information. Confidential testing helps reduce stigma, normalize HIV testing and foster trust in public health agencies. Research suggests that HIV testing rates do not decline when names are

collected or reported to health departments.

OHA created a confidential HIV testing fact sheet (<http://bit.ly/ConfTest>) to help HIV test counselors discuss the benefits of confidential testing and address fears or myths about how client information is used and protected.

This policy change was approved by the Conference of Local Health Officials. The decision was informed by findings from an ad hoc Confidential HIV Testing Workgroup, which included representatives from funded agencies and the Oregon HIV/Viral Hepatitis/Sexually Transmitted Infection Integrated Planning Group. Please contact Dano Beck at daniel.w.beck@state.or.us if you have questions or would like more information about the workgroup's findings.

Please welcome Irina!



We are excited to welcome Irina Kasarskis, MPH, the new data analyst for the OHA STD and HIV Prevention Programs. Irina moved to Portland from Boston and brings valuable experience

with epidemiology and biostatistics.

Her research experience includes data management and analysis, database development and training on the use of electronic data collection systems. You can reach Irina at irina.m.kasarskis@state.or.us or (971) 673-0165. Please welcome her!

Online STI Partner Services training

OHA developed a new online training to help expand the capacity of local health departments to conduct Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Partner Services. The training focuses on skills for interviewing persons diagnosed with an STI (including HIV) and partners that may have been exposed.

The Introduction to STI Partner Services Training is available at <http://bit.ly/trainHIV>. The training is less

than 1.5 hours in length and includes five modules that may be completed separately as time allows.

OHA Disease Intervention Specialists also are available to provide technical assistance to local health departments.



Upcoming events

Queer Life Through An Intergenerational Lens

(Portland)

July 10, 5:30–7:00pm
Pivot, 209 SW 4th Ave.

Swimstravaganza Family PRIDE Potluck

(Portland)

July 12, 3:00–8:30 p.m.

Peninsula Park

Contact Letty at lmartinez@cascadeaids.org.

Swimstravaganza Pool Party (Portland)

For queer and trans youth of color and allies

July 12, 5:15–8:30 p.m.

Peninsula Park

Contact Vanessa at vlatorre@cascadeaids.org.

World Hepatitis

Day

July 28

Learn more at

<http://bit.ly/WHday>.

Women of Wisdom Annual Retreat

For HIV-positive women

Aug. 19–21 at a lodge in the Willamette Valley

To register or learn more, contact Amanda Lubit at alubit@quest-center.org or 503-238-5203.

Camp Starlight

For children affected by HIV

Aug. 24–Aug. 29

Learn more at www.Camp-Starlight.org.

A sexual health framework for gay men

A Summit on Sexual Health Services for Gay, Bisexual and Other Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM) was held in Seattle in May. The summit was attended by a number of agencies in Washington, California and Oregon (HIV Alliance, Multnomah County Health Department, Cascade AIDS Project and OHA). The discussion from the meeting will be used to develop a regional blueprint for gay men's sexual health.



One of the key topics discussed was the use of a sexual health framework to support gay, bisexual and other MSM. This framework acknowledges that being sexually healthy is more than avoiding disease. Sexual health and wellness include physical, mental and social dimensions, which are interconnected.

Traditionally, public health programs and messages have focused on disease (what we want to avoid) rather than wellness (what we want to have). Some disease-focused messages have been criticized for seeming judgmental and directive, for promoting an unnecessary sense of crisis, and for ignoring community strengths and underlying factors that influence health-related behavior.

How can you support a sexual health approach?

Consider focusing on:

- Holistic health, including mental health, substance use, HIV and other STIs
- The context of risk behaviors (e.g., desires and influences)
- Relationships that are positive and respectful
- Resiliency among gay men

For example, agencies might consider replacing “risk assessments” with “sexual health assessments” to identify broader health needs, as well as strengths. If you would like to learn more about using a sexual health framework, check out these resources from the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (<http://bit.ly/10glma>) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://bit.ly/SHF-CDC>).