



PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION  
HIV/STD/TB Section

Kate Brown, Governor



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To: Local Public Health Authorities

From: Tim W. Menza, MD, PhD  
Medical Director

Re: Digital partner services for communicable disease investigation

Dear Provider,

Social networking apps (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat) and geospatial networking apps (e.g., Grindr, Scruff, Tinder, Jack'd, Hornet) are virtual venues used to find sexual partners. In Oregon, among people living with HIV surveyed in the Medical Monitoring Project in 2017, 75% of those who met a new sex partner in the prior year reported meeting those partners using apps. Similarly, among men who have sex with men (MSM) participating in Portland's National HIV Behavioral Surveillance project, almost 40% reported first meeting their most recent sexual partner via an app or the Internet compared to 25% at a bar or club and 10% at a bathhouse or sex club (the next two most common locations). Moreover, the use of digital technologies to find sexual partners is not limited to MSM. Heterosexual men and women, youth, transgender people, and couples commonly use apps to find sex. Apps and the Internet are no longer "emerging" venues for sex-seeking; instead, they are woven into the fabric of modern sexuality.

Therefore, app- and Internet-based partner services are a critical component of comprehensive HIV and STI prevention programs. Digital technologies are an avenue to contact partners without traditional contact information and may increase the proportion of partners interviewed, tested, and treated. Apps are also an avenue to provide sexual health promotion and advertise local public health testing and treatment services. It is imperative that we work with our local information technology departments to gain access to the social and geospatial networking apps and that we educate decision-makers about how digital partner services can more efficiently address STI and HIV transmission using the very technologies that our clients use.

Digital partner services are now standard of care. We strongly encourage all LPHAs to develop digital partner services programs. The OHA HIV and STD Prevention Program is available for technical assistance and guidance in establishing such programs. Please contact Jordan Murray at 971-673-0096 for more information.

Thank you for everything you do to reduce HIV and STI transmission in the state of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Tim W. Menza, MD, PhD