



ROUTINE HIV SCREENING

INTRODUCTION

Approximately 57,000 people in Los Angeles County (LAC) are living with HIV, including 5,100 persons who are unaware of their HIV status. Early HIV diagnosis is critical for preventing the progression of the disease, improving health outcomes, and reducing the likelihood of HIV transmission to others.

The Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) Initiative aims to reduce the number of new HIV transmissions in the U.S. by 90% by 2030. To meet this goal, the percentage of people living with HIV (PLWH) who are aware of their diagnosis in LAC needs to increase from 91% to 95% by 2030. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health), in collaboration with a variety of community partners, is working to expand and improve HIV testing services through routine screening in emergency departments (EDs) and other healthcare settings, a key strategy in the [Ending the HIV Epidemic Plan for Los Angeles County](#).

WHAT IS ROUTINE HIV SCREENING?

Routine HIV screening occurs when HIV testing is provided as a routine element of medical care. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone aged 13 to 64 years should be screened for HIV at least once in their lifetime across healthcare settings.¹ For those at higher risk, such as persons who inject drugs and persons who have sex with partners of unknown HIV status, the CDC recommends testing at least once a year. Despite these guidelines, only 25% of patients who saw a primary care provider in the U.S. in the past year, and who may most benefit from HIV testing, were offered an HIV test.^{1,2}

WHY IS ROUTINE HIV SCREENING IMPORTANT?

Routine HIV screening in clinical settings (e.g., EDs, hospitals, sexual health clinics) is crucial for increasing the proportion of PLWH who are aware of their status, especially in places where HIV is prevalent. It's also a good approach to de-stigmatize HIV and normalize testing, as well as increase the likelihood that people at risk for HIV, who may not be aware, get an HIV test. Routine HIV screening also allows for the early detection of acute HIV infections and the successful linkage of newly and previously diagnosed PLWH to care.

Many people use EDs as their first point of contact with healthcare, and PLWH have been observed to use EDs more frequently than other groups.^{3,4} As a result, EDs, urgent care centers, and hospitals are critical places to offer HIV testing, especially for those who rely on emergency services because they do not have access to a primary care provider.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Aligning with CDC Recommendations

Implementation of routine opt-out HIV screening allows healthcare providers to align with CDC recommendations for HIV testing. An opt-out approach to routine screening is when an HIV test is included as a standard part of every patient screening, regardless of risk. The patient should be informed of the HIV test and allowed to opt-out. The California Department of Public Health also strongly recommends opt-out syphilis, HIV, and hepatitis C screening in emergency departments.⁵

Costs and Resources

Routine HIV screening might raise concerns regarding costs, resources, and client engagement. The U.S. Preventive Services Taskforce has given HIV screening a Grade A recommendation, requiring insurers to cover the service without cost-sharing.^{6,7} In addition, there are a variety of methods to get reimbursed for routine HIV screening.^{8,9}

Workflow

It is vital to incorporate staff who will be impacted by the implementation of routine HIV screening in the design of the routine opt-out HIV screening workflow. One option of note is bundled testing, which uses the existing workflows to add an HIV test for patients who are already having blood drawn for other reasons.

Handling Positive HIV Results

For support disclosing positive HIV results and/or linking patients to HIV care, contact the Public Health Division of HIV and STD Programs Partner Services line at (213) 639-4277, Monday-Friday 8am-5pm.

For more information on routine HIV screening:

- [Integrating Routine HIV Screening Into Your Practice](#)
- [COVID-19 & Routine HIV Screening](#)
- [Routine Screening & Acute HIV](#)
- [Routine HIV Screening at the Largest ED in the Western U.S. \(Los Angeles County + University of Southern California Emergency Department\)](#)

For assistance with your routine screening program or to get involved with EHE efforts, email EHEInitiative@ph.lacounty.gov. HIV self-test kits are also available as an additional testing resource to complement your routine screening program.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/clinicians/screening/benefits.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6647e1.htm>

³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23773723/>

⁴ https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/CDPH%20Document%20Library/AB_2439_Report.ADA.pdf

⁵ <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OAmain.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/human-immunodeficiency-virus-hiv-infection-screening>

⁷ <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/fact-sheet/preventive-services-covered-by-private-health-plans/>

⁸ https://www.stdhivtraining.org/x/ama_coding_guidelines_for_hiv_testing.pdf

⁹ <https://targethiv.org/sites/default/files/file-upload/resources/CPT%20Series%204%20Wrap%20Up2016.pdf>