

What can I say to reassure my client about health department involvement?

- Health departments have an excellent record of handling partner notification confidentially ⁷.
- Clients and partners are treated non-judgmentally and with respect.
- Health department notification ensures confidential, consistent, and accurate information for clients and partners.

What are some benefits of health department notification?

- Breaks chain of infection.
- Notification more likely to occur.
- Confidentiality is maintained for all parties.
- Client can avoid emotional or violent confrontation.
- Appropriate referrals for additional services can be provided.

References:

¹Kamb, M., et al. "Efficacy of Risk-Reduction Counseling to Prevent Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: A Randomized Control Trial. Project RESPECT Study Group." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, October, 7, 1998, 280: 1161-1167

²Fenton, K.A., et al. "HIV partner notification: taking a new look." *AIDS*, November 1, 1997, 11: 1-12.

³Jones, J.L., et al. "Partner Acceptance of Health Department Notification of HIV Exposure, North Carolina." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, September 12, 1990, 264: 1284-1286.

⁴Landis, S.E., et al. "Results of a Randomized Trial of Partner Notification in Cases of HIV Infection in North Carolina." *The New England Journal of Medicine*, January 9, 1992, 326: 101-106.

⁵Stein, M., et al. "Sexual Ethics, Disclosure of HIV-positive Status to Partners." *Archives of Internal Medicine*. February 9, 1998, 158: 253-257.

⁶Landis, S.E., et al. "Results of a Randomized Trial of Partner Notification in Cases of HIV Infection in North Carolina." *The New England Journal of Medicine*, January 9, 1992, 326: 101-106.

⁷Potterat, J.J., et al. "Partner Notification in the Context of HIV." *American Journal of Public Health*, July, 1989, 79: 874-876.

Useful contacts:

DSHS HIV/STD Program Website

www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd

2-1-1 Texas (for HIV/STD testing locations)

2-1-1 (English/Español)

CDC-INFO (National HIV/STD Hotline)

1 (800) CDC-INFO
1 (888) 232-6348 (TTY)

HIV/AIDS Treatment Information Service

1 (800) HIV-0440

HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Information

1 (800) 874-2572

National Clinician's Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Hotline

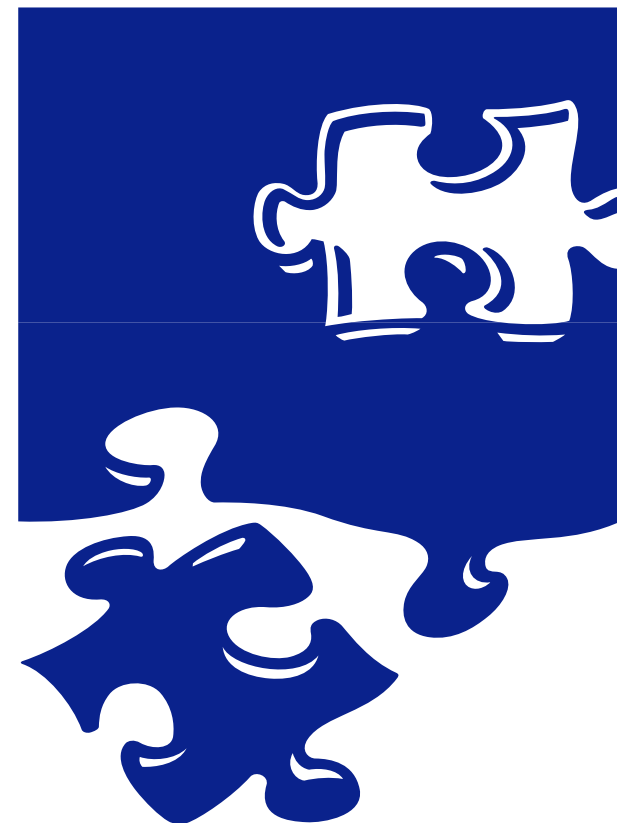
1 (888) 448-4911



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HIV/STD Partner Notification: THE HEALTH PROVIDER'S ROLE



What is partner notification?

Partner notification is the process of contacting persons who have had sex or shared needles with someone newly diagnosed with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

The purpose of partner notification is to let partners know they are at risk for STDs so that uninfected partners might avoid becoming infected and infected partners might avoid transmitting infection. The partners are offered evaluation, individualized risk reduction counseling, testing, treatment, and other prevention services. Notification can be done by the client, or confidentially by a health department professional (usually a Disease Intervention Specialist/DIS).

Why is notification important?

Partner notification breaks the cycle of STDs.

Too often, people who engage in high-risk sexual and needle-sharing activities are unaware of or deny their risk for STDs. Many of those who are infected are asymptomatic.

Studies have shown that a client-centered HIV/STD counseling approach can result in behavior changes, thereby decreasing the likelihood of transmission to others^{1,2}.

One study found, of 132 people notified they had been named as partner to someone diagnosed with HIV, **only 9% thought they were at risk** prior to being notified, yet **23% tested HIV positive**³.

What are your responsibilities as a provider?

You are required to report STDs — including HIV and AIDS — under Title 25, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 97. This mandates what and how to report, as well as who shall report (including, but not limited to: physicians; dentists; hospital, prison and clinic administrators; and laboratories).

For details about reporting regulations, go to:

- www.sos.state.tx.us/tac/25/I/97/F/index.html
- www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/codes/HS000021.html
- or contact the Texas Department of State Health Services HIV/STD Program at 512-533-3000.

How can providers help with partner notification?

1. When diagnosing a client with HIV/STD, discuss the need to evaluate and treat recent sex partners. It will be up to you to decide "recent" on a case by case basis, taking into account the type of infection, any recent negative STD testing, symptoms and expected disease progression.
2. Submit the completed disease reporting form to the health department **in a timely manner**.
3. Collaborate with local health department personnel to provide relevant and accurate information.
4. Encourage clients to use health department notification services, which are usually more successful than client referral⁴.

Why get the health department involved? Most clients tell their own partners, don't they?

When infected individuals inform their partners, the reaction can be emotional, even violent. That may explain why a recent study found that only 60% of persons living with HIV disclosed their HIV status to all their sex partners⁵.

A North Carolina study showed that clients notifying their own partners successfully referred only about 7%, while health department referral suc-

cessfully reached 50%. In the same study, 96% of partners notified of HIV contact were **not aware** they were at risk for HIV. Overall, 23% of those notified tested HIV-positive⁶.

Health department notification services use trained professionals to discreetly notify those at risk, **without revealing anything about the original client**.

How can providers help?

When the health department receives an infectious disease report, they may contact the provider's office to confirm treatment or collect any other information that will help analyze the case. The health department professional can then contact the newly diagnosed client to arrange an interview. Please let your client know the health department may contact them to offer help in locating partners.

What goes on in the DIS interview?

The DIS will discuss infection, treatment and prevention and will answer any questions the client has about his/her situation.

Health department notification will be offered as a service that protects the client's anonymity. Information to help identify and locate partners will be collected. The client can decide which partners he/she will inform and which the health department will locate and notify.

The DIS will coach the client on how to approach any discussion with his/her partners.

**Break the Cycle of STDs...
Support
Partner Notification**