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Public Health Advisory

Increase in Newly Diagnosed Cases of HIV in Fairbanks/Interior Region

January 31, 2023

Summary

The Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) is responding to an increase in newly diagnosed cases of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in the Fairbanks/Interior region among persons with multiple and/or anonymous sex partners, persons having met sexual partners via apps (Grindr, Snapchat, etc.), and persons engaging in condomless/barrierless sex.

In January 2022, SOE identified a time-space HIV cluster in Fairbanks involving 3 new cases of HIV among military service members within a 4-week period. On January 27, 2022, Bassett Army Community Hospital streamed a Public Health Alert on their Facebook, announcing the cases as well as advocating for persons to seek testing and prevention services.

During October through December 2022, 6 new cases of HIV were diagnosed among persons residing in the Fairbanks/Interior region. Case investigation work and partner notifications are ongoing.

Among the newly diagnosed HIV cases since October 2022, 67% had gonorrhea and/or chlamydia co-infection at diagnosis. Among all newly diagnosed HIV cases in the Fairbanks/Interior region since December 2021 (n=11), 73% had gonorrhea and/or chlamydia co-infection at diagnosis.

Public health partnerships are critical to HIV/STD prevention and intervention. Your efforts and collaboration are vital to prevent HIV/STD transmission and to promote available prevention services.

The Alaska Section of Epidemiology encourages all healthcare providers, hospitals, and other healthcare facilities throughout the Fairbanks/Interior region to do the following:

- Routinely conduct a thorough sexual and risk assessment for all sexually active patients, as per [national recommendations](#).
- Offer all patients comprehensive HIV/STD testing (e.g., HIV, syphilis, hepatitis, and multi-site gonorrhea/chlamydia screening).
- Review patient-centered and individualized risk-reduction techniques during testing and/or treatment encounters.
- Provide education and referral to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) or post exposure prophylaxis (PEP), as appropriate.
- Report HIV/STD cases to the Section of Epidemiology [within 2 business days](#).

Additional Screening Recommendations

- All persons aged 15–65 years should be tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime.

- Test all sexually active gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, and all sexually active transgender persons at least annually for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea.
- More frequent testing (e.g., every 3–6 months) should be considered for persons at increased risk, including persons who inject drugs (PWID) and share injection drug use equipment, persons with multiple sex partners, persons diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease, and persons with recent exposure to a sexually transmitted disease.
- Chlamydia and gonorrhea are site-specific infections. Multi-site testing (i.e., extragenital testing) includes screening all parts of the body used for sex, including urogenital, rectal, and pharyngeal sites.

HIV Partner Services and Linkage to Care:

- Please refer patients to HIV care or contact Sarah Brewster (HIV Surveillance Coordinator; Phone: 907-269-8000) to coordinate HIV care referral.
 - Decreasing viral load improves the health of persons living with HIV and is highly effective in preventing HIV transmission.
- Encourage patients to refer their sex and/or needle sharing partners for testing and prevention services.
- Inform patients that they will be contacted by a SOE Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) to facilitate confidential partner notification, prevention counseling, and/or referral to HIV care and other services.

Fairbanks PrEP Resources:

- [Chena Health](#)
- Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center – Limited to eligible persons
- Eielson Medical Clinic (Eielson Airforce Base) – Limited to service members and dependents
- Fort Wainwright Health Services – Limited to service members and dependents
- [Interior Community Health Center](#)
- [Planned Parenthood](#)

Alaska Resources:

- Alaska HIV Linkage to Care Program
<https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/hivstd/Pages/l2c/default.aspx>
- Alaska PrEP Providers <https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/hivstd/Pages/hivstd/awareness.aspx>
- Alaska Reportable Conditions
<https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/Pages/pubs/conditions/default.aspx>
- Free at-home HIV/STD test kits for Alaska residents
<https://www.iknowmine.org/resource/sexual-health/>

Additional Resources:

- CDC Get Tested <https://gettested.cdc.gov>
- CDC HIV Resources <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv>
- CDC HIV Risk Reduction Tool <https://hivrisk.cdc.gov/>
- CDC HIV Testing Guidelines <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/guidelines/testing.html>
- CDC PrEP Resources <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/clinicians/prevention/prep.html>
 - PrEP Clinical Guidelines <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/risk/prep/cdc-hiv-prep-guidelines-2021.pdf>

- PrEP Clinical Providers' Supplement <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/pdf/risk/prep/cdc-hiv-prep-provider-supplement-2021.pdf>
- CDC STD Resources <https://www.cdc.gov/std>
- CDC STD Treatment Guidelines <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/default.htm>
- CDC Treatment as Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/art/index.html>
- Drug-Resistance Testing <https://hivinfo.nih.gov/understanding-hiv/fact-sheets/drug-resistance>
- HIV.gov <https://www.hiv.gov>
- NIH HIV Clinical Guidelines <https://hivinfo.nih.gov/home-page>

*This message is sent to you as a service of the State of Alaska DoH, Division of Public Health, through the Section of Epidemiology, 3601 C Street, Suite 540, Anchorage, Alaska 99503, (907) 269-8000.
The Section of Epidemiology maintains a 24-hour Emergency Number, 1-800-478-0084.
Website: <https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/Pages/default.aspx>*