

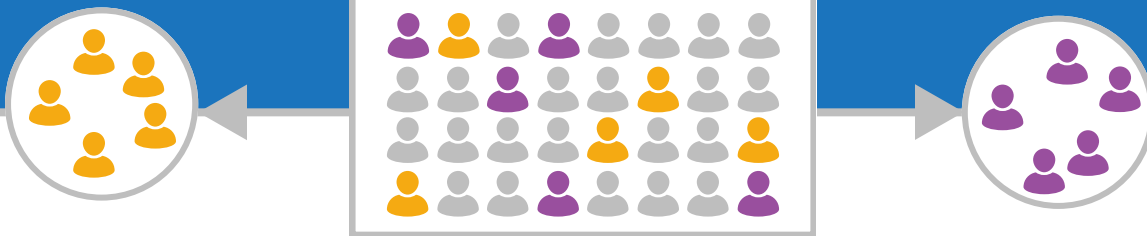


CLUSTER DETECTION AND RESPONSE

COMMUNITY FACT SHEET

WHAT IS AN HIV CLUSTER?

A group of people in a sexual or social network or in a geographic location who are affected by rapid HIV transmission. If clusters are known, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) provides additional support and resources to communities and people who urgently need them.



HOW DO WE FIND CLUSTERS OF HIV?



GENETIC CLUSTERS

Health care providers conduct drug resistance testing as a routine part of HIV clinical care to find the best HIV medication for their patients. This test generates genetic sequences from the virus (not the person). People with genetically similar HIV may be closely linked. Groups of people with related HIV diagnoses are often referred to as a "cluster". Genetic sequencing is the main way of finding clusters.



TIME-SPACE CLUSTERS

Public Health is responsible for tracking patterns of disease across health districts in LA County, including new HIV diagnoses. A time-space cluster might be found when a higher-than-expected number of new HIV cases are diagnosed in a geographic location. Time-space clusters need further analysis because they may indicate an increase in HIV testing that led to new diagnoses of older infections.



PROVIDER/COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION

Medical providers, Public Health staff, or community partners may notice an increase in HIV diagnoses among a specific group of people and alert the Public Health.

WHAT DO CLUSTERS TELL US?

Clusters indicate populations where HIV is spreading quickly. We use genetic sequencing to find clusters that would otherwise be missed through epidemiologic methods alone.

Research has shown that networks identified by genetic sequencing have had transmission rates that were, on average, up to 11 times the national rate.*

*<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0749379721003639>

WHAT DON'T CLUSTERS TELL US?

The direction of HIV transmission can never be determined using cluster data. While two people may have similar genetic sequences, it is not possible to determine who gave HIV to whom.

Clusters may only represent a small part of a larger transmission network because not everyone in a cluster has been diagnosed and not everyone with HIV has had drug resistance testing.

HOW DO WE RESPOND TO CLUSTERS?

FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Prioritize the people affected by HIV for linkage or re-engagement to HIV care and other needed services.
- Interview people to gather information about their sexual or needle-sharing partners.
- Contact sexual partners and link them to HIV testing and care (names of original sexual partners are never disclosed).

FOR COMMUNITIES

- Expand HIV/STI testing, PrEP and PEP resources, and/or harm reduction (e.g., syringe service programs) within the affected community or area.
- Coordinate with partners who serve the community.

FOR WIDESPREAD CHANGE

- Distribute health alerts to providers and partners.
- Publish educational information and increase awareness.
- Develop programs/policies to address barriers to HIV prevention.



If we find a cluster and the people involved, we can provide services, interrupt transmission, and prevent the spread of HIV.

HOW WILL PRIVACY BE PROTECTED?



Public Health is required to report de-identified HIV data to the CDC. Names and other identifying information are never included.



Only a small number of authorized staff have access to HIV cluster data. Personal Identifying Information (PII) is NOT shared outside Public Health or with other government entities.



Public Health complies with comprehensive security and confidentiality protocols that adhere to all State and Federal laws and CDC requirements.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- 1 Learn more about HIV cluster detection and response [here](#):
- 2 Get tested for HIV and STIs regularly.
- 3 Learn more about PrEP and other HIV prevention methods.
- 4 Share this information with friends and other community members.
- 5 Call (213) 639-4277 to contact Public Health staff or to notify someone about an exposure to HIV/STI.



RESOURCES



Ending the HIV Epidemic

