

DATE:	February 1, 2016
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Karen M. Murphy, PhD, RN, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Partner Services for STD/HIV Patients; the Responsibilities of Physicians and the Department of Health
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	Statewide
STREET ADDRESS:	Statewide
COUNTY:	Statewide
MUNICIPALITY:	Statewide
ZIP CODE:	Statewide

This transmission is a “Health Advisory” provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, INFECTION CONTROL, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL

EMS COUNCILS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

FQHCs: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (Department) is providing the following information to remind health care providers of the importance of partner services as a valuable strategy in the prevention of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD). The 2008 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines provide integrated recommendations for all patients with newly diagnosed or reported HIV infection, gonorrhea, chlamydia, or early syphilis to receive partner services.

What Are HIV and STD partner services?

The term “partner services” includes a variety of services which are offered to people infected with HIV/STD and their sex or needle-sharing partners. Partner services are free, confidential, voluntary, and a proven evidence-based intervention that can help break the chain of infection, which is a benefit to your patients, their partners, and to the community. Information gathered by the Department during the course of partner services is protected by confidentiality laws and will not be released without the patient or partner’s consent.

The primary components of partner services are:

- partner notification – a process through which infected persons are interviewed to elicit information about their partners, who can then be confidentially notified of their possible exposure or potential risk
- prevention counseling
- testing for HIV and other STDs
- hepatitis screening and vaccination
- treatment or linkage to medical care
- linkage or referral to other prevention services
- linkage or referral to other services, including but not limited to, reproductive health services, prenatal care, substance abuse treatment, social support, housing assistance, legal services, and mental health services

Your role as a private medical provider

The relationship between you and your patients is critical in helping to identify sex and needle-sharing partners and ensuring the success of partner services. Incorporating partner services into existing clinical services as a routine standard of care presents a valuable opportunity to fulfill your shared responsibility to prevent the spread of HIV and other STDs. Some things you can do to accomplish this are:

- inform patients of the value and importance of partner services
- identify patients who have not received STD/HIV partner services or who need additional partner services
- provide partner services directly to the client
- refer the client to the local health department to ensure at-risk clients are routinely linked to needed care, prevention and support services
- notify health department staff of elicited partners in order to ensure they are located and provided with necessary testing and prevention services, including referral and linkage to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), if appropriate

Additional online training resources for HIV and STD partner services

For additional training resources on STD and HIV partner services, providers are encouraged to go online to: www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/partners/Recommendations.html.

Additional information

A brochure entitled “Partner Services: The role of the health care provider,” which contains additional information from the Department about partner services, is available by clicking [here](#).

Health care providers may also call the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Bureau of Communicable Diseases weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

HIV Program	STD Program
717-783-0572	717-787-3981

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of February 1, 2016 but may be modified in the future.