

The Bronx Knows HIV Testing Initiative Final Report

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WHAT'S YOUR HIV STATUS?
- stay safe + get care ? get tested



The Bronx Knows Initiative: Background

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The Bronx Knows is a large-scale public health initiative to increase voluntary HIV testing so that every Bronx resident between the ages of 13 to 64 learns his or her HIV status and has access to quality care and prevention. *The Bronx Knows* is New York City's first borough-wide HIV testing initiative and one of the largest HIV testing efforts in the country.

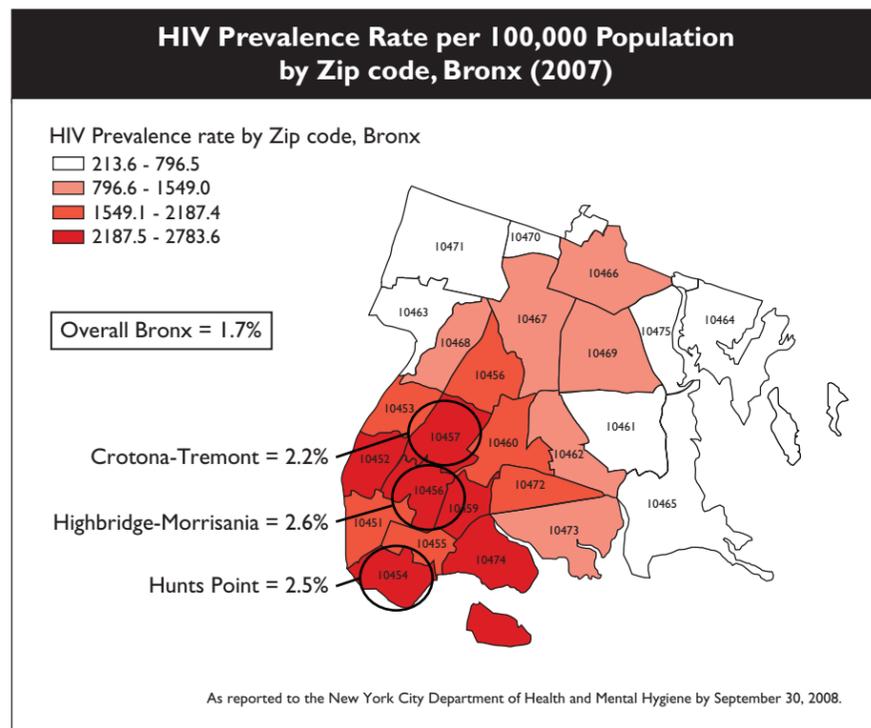
The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (the Health Department) partnered with community agencies to launch *The Bronx Knows* on National HIV Testing Day, 2008. *The Bronx Knows* initially set out to test the estimated 250,000 Bronx residents who had never been tested for HIV. Since the Health Department and its 78 Bronx community partners (representing more than 140 testing sites) began this collaborative effort, key targets for increasing testing have been surpassed. *The Bronx Knows* partners have offered and conducted 607,570 HIV tests and have identified over 4,800 confirmed HIV positive tests to date. Of those, at least 1,700 individuals were reported to be newly diagnosed and more than three-quarters have been linked to care. Hospitals, community health centers, community-based organizations, faith-based groups and educational institutions worked together to make the Initiative a success.

Why the Bronx?

Early in 2007, leaders of medical institutions and community organizations from the Bronx approached the Health Department to discuss the idea of a borough-wide HIV testing initiative that would mobilize the borough's hospitals, clinics and community-based organizations to make HIV testing a routine part of medical care and more widely available in the borough.

The Bronx was an ideal place for the first borough-wide HIV testing initiative because:

- ▶ In 2007, the Bronx was heavily impacted by HIV.
 - It had the highest HIV death rate in New York City. Nearly one in four Bronx residents was diagnosed with HIV when they were already sick with AIDS, instead of earlier in the course of infection.
 - HIV prevalence was 1.7% overall — higher than the city-wide rate at 1.3%, but some Bronx neighborhoods had a prevalence rate as high as 2.6%, comparable to rates in Haiti and Ethiopia.
- ▶ The Bronx has a history of successful collaboration among healthcare facilities and community groups.
- ▶ The Bronx population is composed mainly of the two major demographic groups most heavily impacted by HIV (Blacks and Latinos).
- ▶ With nearly 1.3 million people, the borough's population size was manageable for the initiative.



“Knowing your status is one of the best things you can do for your own health and to stop the spread of HIV. Bronx residents are taking the lead by getting tested.”

-Dr. Thomas Farley, New York City Health Commissioner

The Bronx Knows Approach

The Bronx Knows brought together community-based organizations, community health centers, hospitals, colleges and universities, and faith-based organizations to improve the health of Bronx residents and decrease new HIV infections in New York City.

The Health Department and community partners employed a three-pronged approach to accomplish its goal of helping all Bronx residents learn their HIV status:

- Clinical and non-clinical partners set out to make HIV testing more available throughout the borough by offering HIV testing as part of their ongoing services.
- The Health Department and community partners sought to raise awareness and increase the demand for HIV testing in the Bronx by making an HIV test a routine part of health care, thereby lessening the stigma still associated with getting an HIV test.
- All partners agreed to ensure prompt linkage to HIV primary care.

HIV/AIDS in the Bronx

- Nearly 1/4 of HIV infections in NYC every year are among Bronx residents.
- Nearly 1/3 of total NYC AIDS-related deaths each year are among Bronx residents.



I. Making HIV Testing More Available

Healthcare Settings

- The Bronx Knows worked with healthcare facilities to implement and expand HIV testing at their sites by routinely offering the test to patients in emergency departments, in-patients units and outpatient settings.
- These clinical sites developed creative ways to incorporate HIV testing into their patient services. For example, one hospital used mobile “test carts” to reach all in-patients with point-of-care (rapid) testing while another clinic programmed into the electronic medical record a provider reminder to offer the test.

Community Settings

- Community-based organizations and faith-based groups that had never offered HIV testing received training and assistance to establish HIV testing programs.
- Community-based organizations and other partners brought testing to new locations commonly frequented by Bronx residents, such as hair salons, clothing stores, farmers markets, beaches, and pharmacies.

The Bronx Knows Approach

2. Raising Awareness and Demand for HIV Testing

- In addition to increasing the availability of testing services, *The Bronx Knows* worked to motivate community residents to get tested and to accept an offer of an HIV test.
- *The Bronx Knows* launched a social marketing campaign to promote awareness of HIV testing and the importance of knowing one's HIV status.
- *The Bronx Knows* partners offered HIV testing at community events to minimize stigma associated with HIV. HIV testing with other health screenings at community events was intended to make HIV testing as routine and non-stigmatizing as diabetes or blood pressure screening.

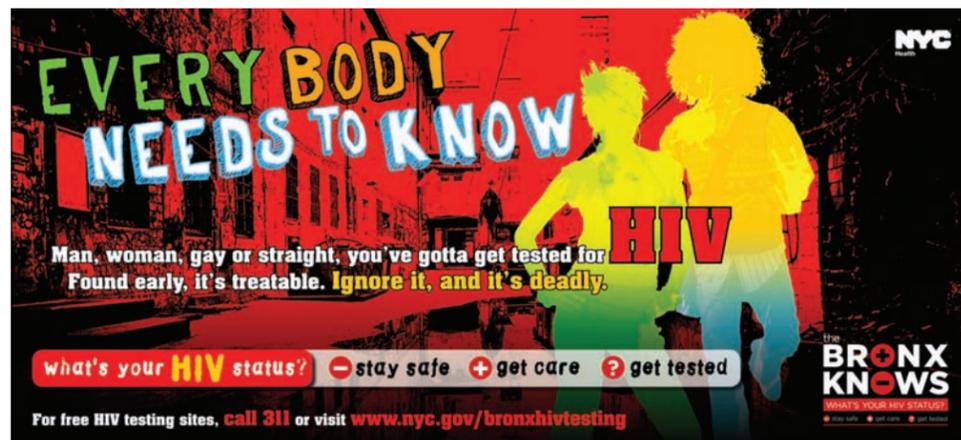
3. Improving Linkage to Care

Increased testing leads to the identification of new HIV infections. It is crucial to promptly link newly diagnosed HIV-positive patients to primary medical care and support services and to re-engage HIV-positive individuals who have fallen out of care. *The Bronx Knows* therefore worked to improve linkage protocols at partner agencies and conducted the following linkage related activities:

- Facilitated partnerships between clinical and nonclinical agencies to create a comprehensive network of referrals for linking HIV-positive individuals to care and re-engaging those who had fallen out of care.
- Mapped partner agencies to show their proximity to each other, making referrals more convenient for patients and agencies.
- Supported partners' linkage plans. Each agency periodically reviewed its plan to identify gaps in services.
- Hosted networking events to keep initiative partners engaged in linkage to care efforts.

"This Initiative has helped us work with diverse organizations to achieve common goals. The collaboration helped us link patients to care and helped Bronx residents who didn't yet know their status to have that vital information."

-Dr. Susan Amenechi-Enahoro, Morris Heights Health Center



Implementing *The Bronx Knows*

Building Partnerships

Early in 2007, the Health Department convened a group of leaders from medical institutions and community organizations to form *The Bronx Knows* Steering Committee. The Steering Committee worked with the Health Department to devise a strategy for engaging partner agencies and building coalitions among them to increase both the supply and demand for HIV testing in the Bronx.

The strategy sought to enlist:

- Hospitals
- Community health centers (CHCs)
- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Faith-based organizations (FBOs)
- Colleges and Universities
- Community leaders
- Local businesses
- Elected officials
- Bronx residents
- The Health Department held key stakeholder meetings to introduce the goals of the Initiative and to obtain the support of major institutions and leaders of clinical institutions and community organizations in the Bronx.
- Hospitals, CHCs, CBOs, FBOs and colleges and universities signed a Statement of Support pledging to make HIV testing a routine service at their institutions or to link their clients to HIV testing sites and services.
- As word spread about the borough-wide effort, new agencies joined the Initiative, increasing the size and scope of *The Bronx Knows* network.
- The New York City Commissioner of Health met with hospital, community health center and healthcare management organization (HMO) CEOs to encourage routine HIV screening in healthcare settings and to encourage discussion of *The Bronx Knows* Initiative at their sites.
- Relationships emerged between medical institutions, community clinics, and community-based organizations as they began to coordinate referrals.
- Participating agencies shared ideas during *The Bronx Knows* partners meetings and hosted monthly community health fairs and HIV testing events.

The Partners

Strategy & Operations

- NYC Health Department
- *The Bronx Knows* Steering Committee

Testing & Care Providers/Settings

- Hospitals
- Community Health Centers (CHCs)
- Community-based Organizations (CBOs)

Testing Promoters

- Media Outlets
- Community Leaders
- Elected Officials
- Local Businesses
- Faith-based Organizations (FBOs)
- Colleges and Universities

The Bronx Knows Partner Strategy

Buy-in



Implementation Planning



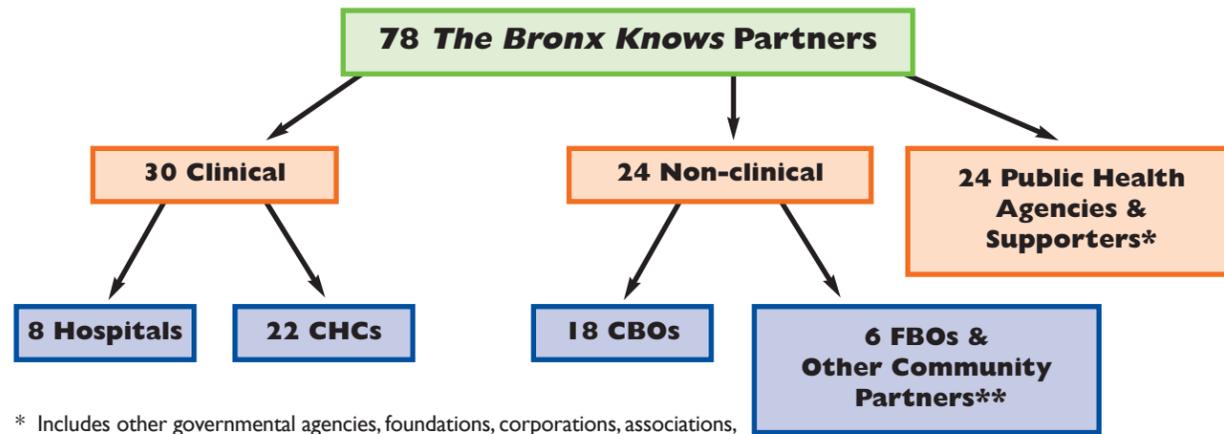
Training & Technical Assistance



Data Monitoring and Reporting

Implementing *The Bronx Knows*

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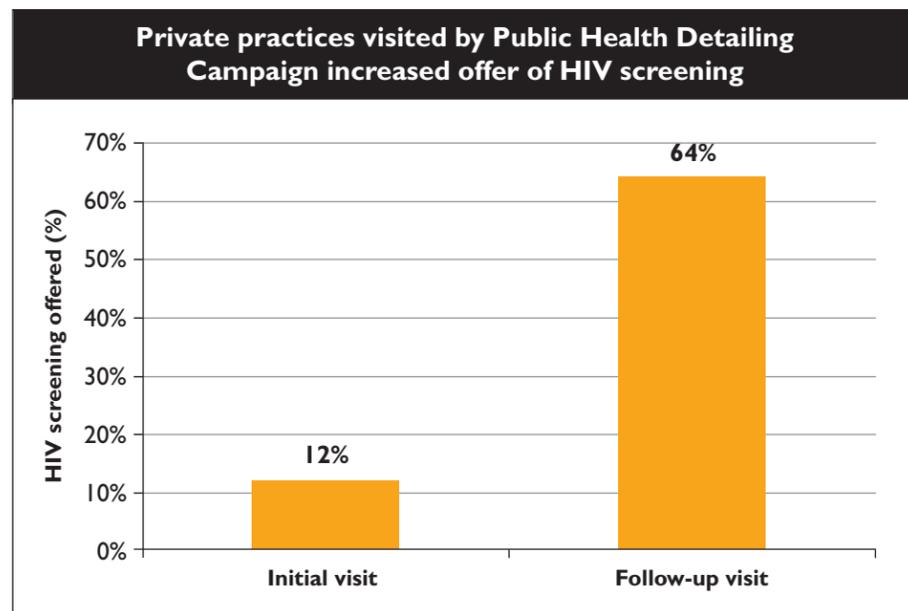


* Includes other governmental agencies, foundations, corporations, associations, networks, private practices and pharmacies.

** Includes colleges and universities.

The Bronx Knows Public Health Detailing Campaign

Health Department representatives made visits to health care providers and staff in private practice settings and hospitals to discuss and promote HIV testing. “Detailing Action Kits” were distributed during these visits. Over the course of the detailing campaign, 320 health care practices were visited and 1,309 healthcare staff was reached. Including group presentations to private practices, as well as initial and follow-up visits, a total of 2,657 contacts were made. The number of providers offering HIV testing to all patients ages 13–64 increased from 12% at baseline to 64% at follow-up. The number of health care providers who reported linking patients with a positive test result to care by calling and making an appointment with a health care provider specializing in HIV care doubled from baseline to follow-up. The detailing campaign broadened the scope of *The Bronx Knows* by reaching private providers and engaging them in the borough-wide effort to increase routine HIV screening.



NYC DOHMH, 2011 HIV Testing Public Health Detailing Campaign Final Report

Supporting Partner Agencies

The Health Department provided technical assistance to help healthcare facilities implement routine HIV screening and to help community agencies implement or expand HIV testing services. Community partners met regularly to discuss barriers and successes and to strategize how to maintain Initiative momentum.

Technical assistance included guidance on:

- Implementation of routine HIV screening
- Streamlined HIV counseling
- Use of rapid testing devices
- New York State permits for laboratory testing
- Data monitoring and evaluation
- Billing and reimbursement
- Testing event development and support

The Bronx Knows also provided the following resources to partner agencies:

- HIV rapid test kits for uninsured patients in medical settings and for CBOs with no funding to conduct HIV testing
- Technical assistance for expanding HIV testing programs
- A borough-wide social marketing and media campaign
- Support for community testing events
- Training on a web-based data reporting system
- Assistance with HIV billing and reimbursement
- Centralized activity coordination

“Working together as partners is essential for combating the disproportionate rate of new HIV diagnoses among Latinos. We look forward to continuing our work as a *Bronx Knows* partner and helping to make every day HIV testing day.”

-Ximena Morgan, Director of Programs at Hispanic AIDS Forum (HAF).

Implementing *The Bronx Knows*

Involving the Community

Community engagement was a key aspect of *The Bronx Knows* in its efforts to help all Bronx residents learn their HIV status. To spread the core messages of the Initiative, the Health Department used print, broadcast and social media to promote testing throughout the borough and to highlight the availability of free testing by the Health Department and *The Bronx Knows* partner agencies.

In the Community

- Influential community and political leaders lent their voices to the campaign, including President Bill Clinton, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, current CDC Director Thomas Frieden, and Bronx Borough Presidents Adolfo Carrion and Ruben Diaz, Jr.
- Partner agencies hosted HIV testing events and incorporated testing into other activities held within their communities, such as business expos and college or career fairs.
- Community Boards promoted HIV testing by distributing palm cards and referring residents to mobile HIV testing vans stationed in highly trafficked areas.
- Partner agencies brought HIV testing to nail salons, barber shops and hair salons, farmer's markets, clothing stores, church festivals and other local events.
- Agencies displayed large banners at their sites identifying themselves as Initiative partners and HIV test sites.
- The Initiative produced promotional items such as palm cards, wristbands, and tote bags, and distributed them at community events.

On the Streets

- *The Bronx Knows* message was placed in subway stations, bus shelters, and on billboards.
- Clean Air Transport (CAT) vehicles wrapped in *The Bronx Knows* artwork served as moving advertisements throughout the borough. Following inquiries from passengers, palm card holders were installed on the vehicle to ensure that riders receive information about where to get tested.
- *The Bronx Knows* posters were placed in beauty/barber shops, nail salons, check cashing and bail bond locations, and retail outlets.

On the Airwaves

- Local radio stations partnered with *The Bronx Knows* to promote and host HIV testing events in the borough. Popular radio personalities announced the events on their shows, which helped attract large numbers of Bronx residents.
- *The Bronx Knows* concluded with a culminating concert co-hosted by a popular local radio station and featuring a major hip-hop star. To obtain free tickets to the concert, within the six weeks leading up to the event, station listeners had to be tested for HIV at one of *The Bronx Knows* partner agencies. Staff on mobile units provided by *The Bronx Knows* partner agencies tested 225 concert fans that were unable to test in the weeks prior to the event. Overall, more than 2,800 Bronx residents got tested as part of this concert event.

Online

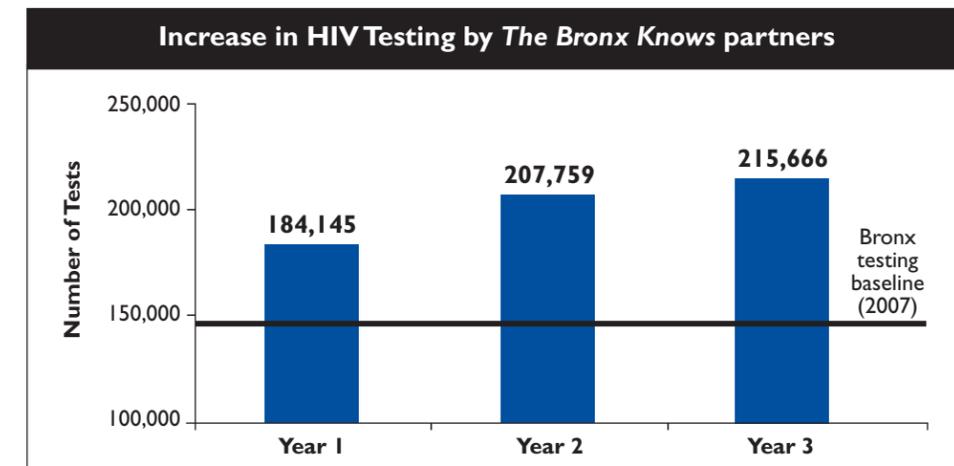
- *The Bronx Knows* website was developed for the Initiative and hosts an HIV testing site locator that is searchable by neighborhood name and zip code. The website also includes videos highlighting partner accomplishments and video messages from NYC elected officials.
- The NYC Knows Facebook page, launched on Dec 1, 2010, encourages conversations about HIV testing and promotes testing events across the city. The page includes a separate tab for *The Bronx Knows* Initiative, listing all the Initiative partners, with hyperlinks to partner sites.

Achievements

The Bronx Knows surpassed its key goals through collaboration with community partners.

By June 2011, *The Bronx Knows* partners:

- Conducted 607,570 HIV tests.
- Confirmed over 4,800 HIV positive tests.
- Of those, at least 1,700 were reported to be newly diagnosed cases.
- Linked more than three-quarters of newly diagnosed individuals to HIV primary care.



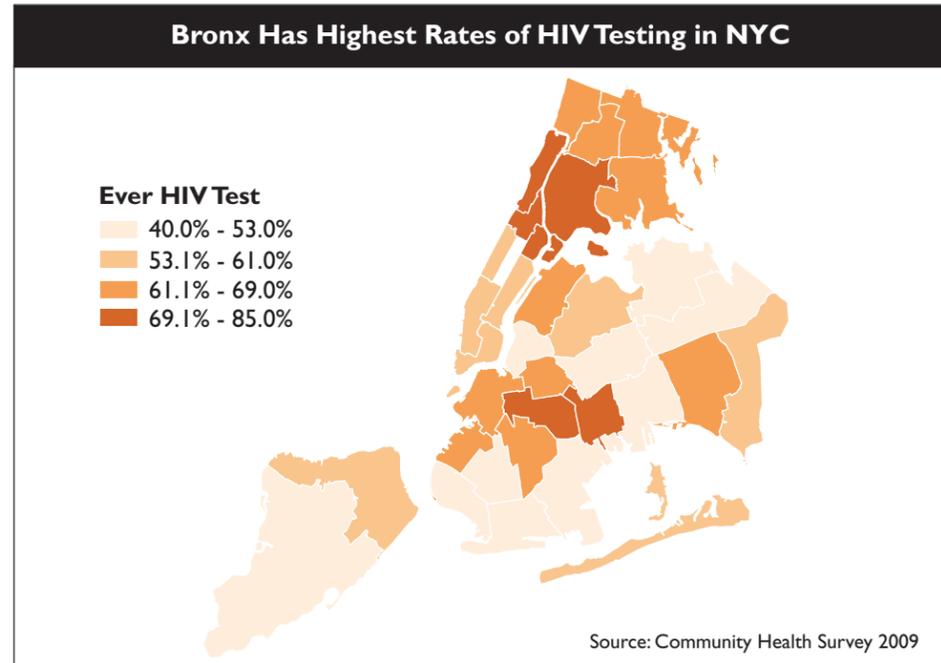
More than 600,000 HIV Tests Conducted* Over 4,800 Confirmed Positives Identified <small>*Among reporting partners of <i>The Bronx Knows</i></small>		
Sector	HIV Tests	Confirmed Positive
TOTAL	607,570	4,820 (0.8%)
Hospitals	277,391	2,317 (0.8%)
CHCs	275,531	1,690 (0.6%)
CBOs	54,648	813 (1.5%)

“*The Bronx Knows* Initiative is an exceptional example of what can be accomplished when community partners, government and individuals all work together. As a result of this Initiative, nearly two thousand Bronx residents were newly diagnosed with HIV and linked to care. The real benefit for all those Bronx residents who were tested is that they now know their HIV status and can take appropriate action: get into treatment if positive, or if negative, reduce their risk so that they remain negative.”

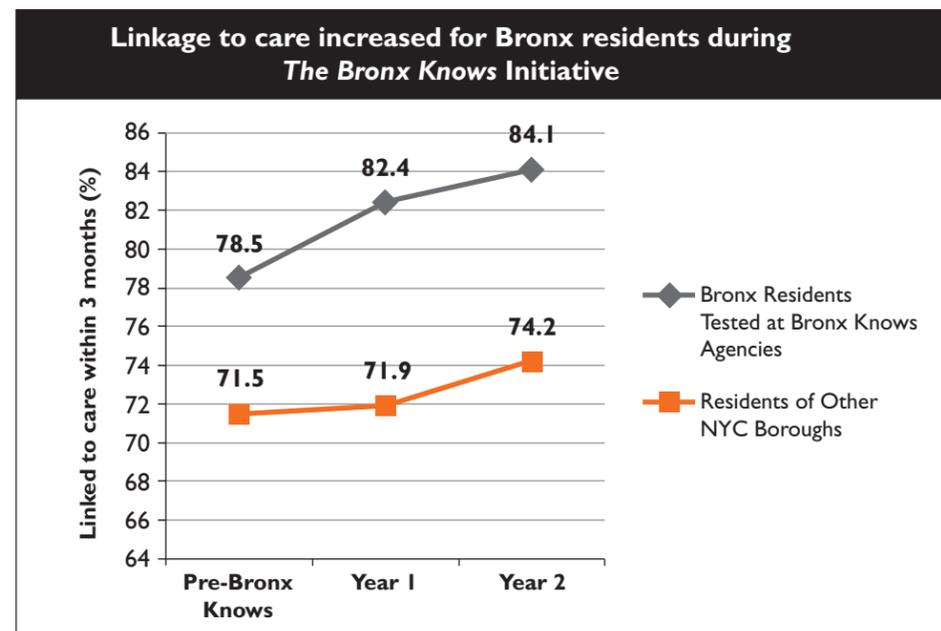
-Dr. Monica Sweeney
New York City Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control

Achievements

The Bronx Knows has shown that a coordinated HIV screening initiative in health care settings paired with increased targeted testing in the community can identify more HIV infections and improve linkage to care on a municipal scale.



In 2007, 72.3% of Bronx residents aged 18–64 reported that they had ever been tested. In 2009, 79.1% of Bronx residents aged 18–64 reported that they had ever been tested. This is a 9.4% relative increase in testing among Bronx residents aged 18–64.



The Changing Landscape of HIV Testing

The Health Department is making additional substantial efforts to routinize HIV testing throughout New York City.

- As of September 2010, New York State law now requires health care professionals to offer a voluntary HIV test to all patients between the ages of 13 and 64 years in most healthcare settings. The amended public health law also removes the barrier of separate written consent for rapid HIV tests.
- The CDC and the National Institutes of Health chose the Bronx as one of two sites for HTPN 065 (TLC-Plus), a research study evaluating the feasibility of an enhanced Test, Link-to-Care plus Treat approach for HIV prevention in the US.
- *The Bronx Knows* Initiative’s Steering Committee will continue to promote and offer HIV testing in the Bronx, with support from the Health Department.
- Building on the success of *The Bronx Knows*, the Health Department launched a second borough-wide testing initiative, *Brooklyn Knows*, on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2010. *Brooklyn Knows* will bring New York City another step closer to the goal of making HIV testing a routine part of health care.

“The Bronx can build on its success by further increasing its testing rate. This effort will set a model not only for the city but for the whole country. We thank the many groups and health care providers who are pledging to help achieve this goal.”

-Thomas R. Frieden, New York City Commissioner of Health, 2002-2009

The Bronx Knows Partners

DOHMH partnered with 78 agencies representing over 140 sites throughout the Bronx to carry out *The Bronx Knows* HIV Testing Initiative. Partners included all eight major hospitals, 22 community health centers, 21 community and faith-based organizations and 25 other partners including colleges and universities, private physicians' offices, Health Department sexually transmitted disease and tuberculosis clinics, and local businesses.

- Africa Redemption Alliance International
- African Services Committee
- AIDS Healthcare Foundation
- Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Division of Substance Abuse
- All Med Medical & Rehabilitation Centers
- Basics/Promesa Systems, Inc.
- Bioscrip Pharmacy
- Bronx AIDS Services
- Bronx Clergy Task Force
- Bronx Community College
- Bronx Community Health Network, Inc.
- Bronx Community Pride Center
- Bronx HIV CARE Network
- Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center
- Bronxworks
- Care for the Homeless
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Children's Aid Society
- Citiwide Harm Reduction
- Community Health Care Association of New York State
- Community Healthcare Network
- Davidson Community Health Center
- Destination Tomorrow
- Dominican Sisters Family Health Service, Inc.
- East Harlem Council for Human Services Boriken Neighborhood Health Center
- Gay Men's Health Crisis
- Greater NY Hospitals Association
- Health People
- HELP/PSI
- HHC Morrisania Diagnostic and Treatment Center
- HHC Segundo Ruiz Belvis Diagnostic and Treatment Center
- Hispanic AIDS Forum
- Hunts Point Multi-Service Center, Inc.
- Institute for Family Health
- Jacobi Medical Center
- James J. Peters VA Medical Center
- Latino Commission on AIDS
- Lehman College
- Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center
- Manhattan College

The Bronx Knows Partners

- Monroe College
- Montefiore Medical Center
- Morris Heights Health Center
- Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development
- NARCO Freedom, Inc.
- National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS
- National HIV Testing Mobilization Campaign, US DHHS, Office of HIV/AIDS Policy
- New York Harm Reduction Educators, Inc.
- New York Westchester Square Medical Center
- North Central Bronx Hospital
- NY/NJ AIDS Education and Training Center
- NYC DOHMH, Bureau of STD Control
- NYC DOHMH, Bureau of Tuberculosis Control
- NYC DOHMH, Correctional Health Services
- NYC DOHMH, Transitional Health Care Coordination
- NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation
- NY State DOH AIDS Institute
- Office of Dr. Arthur Hall
- Office of Dr. Jamie F. Roman
- Office of Dr. Robert Shargani
- Office of the Bronx Borough President
- Planned Parenthood of NYC
- Project Achieve (Columbia University)
- Public Health Solutions
- Puerto Rican Family Institute
- Soundview HealthCare Network
- South Bronx Mental Health Council, Inc.
- St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction
- St. Barnabas Hospital
- The Bronx Health Link, Inc.
- The Floating Hospital
- The HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies at the New York State Psychiatric Institute and Columbia University
- Union Community Health Center
- United Bronx Parents, Inc.
- Urban Health Plan, Inc.
- Urban Starzz
- Vocational Instruction Project (VIP) Community Services, Inc.
- William F. Ryan Community Health Center

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