



Description of NYC's Field Services Unit Program to Re-engage Out of Care PLWH in Care

Background

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Field Services Unit (FSU) provides partner services, the process of eliciting HIV exposed partner names, notifying partners of their HIV exposure, provide HIV testing and linkage to care, to patients newly diagnosed HIV. FSU was created in June 2006 in response to the success of NYC DOHMH disease intervention specialist (DIS) eliciting and notifying partners in sexually transmitted disease (STD) clinics. FSU's initiative began by placing DIS in 8 large hospitals in areas with the greatest burden of HIV/AIDS to assist providers and patients with partner services. Today, FSU provides partner services to all HIV testing facilities citywide.

General Linkage to Care Program Description

- FSU provides partner services, including linkage to HIV medical care to persons living with HIV (PLWH) who have been out-of-care (OOC) for at least 6 months. OOC-PLWH are selected from the NYC surveillance registry of all persons diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. This registry has information on all HIV- diagnosed persons in NYC with AIDS since 1981, and HIV since 2000. The registry includes HIV-related laboratory information including CD4 cell count, viral load level, HIV genotypes, and Western blot positive results.
- PLWH are considered to be OOC if they do not have a lab (CD4 or viral load) reported to the registry during the previous 6 months. Lab reports are used as a proxy for receipt of HIV medical care. Using these criteria, a data analyst generates a list of potential OOC PLWH to pursue for partner and linkage to care services.
- PLWH are excluded from the list if: (1) their most recent NYC residential address could not be confirmed, or (2) the PLWH's CD4 or VL was not ordered by a New York City medical provider.
- Investigations of cases are not prioritized based on HIV viral load or CD4 test results. All PLWH on the final list are assigned for partner services and linkage to care efforts.

Outreach Efforts

- Prior to conducting a field investigation, the health department case manager performs a registry check to obtain the name of the last medical provider and any other information that would be pertinent to the investigation. Chart reviews are also performed at the last known facility to verify the OOC status of the PLWH.
- Subsequently, the following steps are taken to locate the PLWH:
 - Phone calls to all available telephone numbers on different days and times.
 - Letters are mailed to the last available NYC address. This letter requests that the PLWH contact the PHA regarding important health information.



Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor
Thomas A. Farley, MD, MPH
Commissioner

- Home visits are conducted on different days and times. If the PLWH is not home, the PHA leaves a letter (typically under the door) for the PLWH to contact them.
- PLWH who have been reached, via face-to-face meeting or telephone, are asked to confirm that they have been out of care for 6 months. Those confirmed to be OOC are offered assistance with re-engaging in medical care.
- All PLWH initiated for OOC are dispositioned as: (1) linked to care, (2) refused linkage, (3) already in care, (4) unable to locate, or (5) moved.

Partner services

- Partner services, which entail the identification and notification of sex or needle-sharing partners of their potential exposure to HIV, are offered to all OOC PLWH who have been located.
- Health department case managers offer HIV testing to all located partners. Partners who test positive or are previous positive, but are not receiving care, are given assistance linking to care.

Evaluation

- Each month FSU evaluates its OOC program, particularly focusing on the number of PLWH initiated, number linked-to-care, number with kept medical appointment, number of partners elicited, notified, and tested for HIV.