

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 11, 2013

TO: County Health Department Directors/Administrators
County Health Department Nursing Directors
HIV/AIDS Program Coordinators
HIV/AIDS Contract Managers
Ryan White Part B Lead Agencies

FROM: Celeste M. Philip, MD, MPH 
Interim Bureau Chief, Bureau of Communicable Diseases
Division of Disease Control and Health Protection

SUBJECT: Prevention and Patient Care Program Notice # 001 HIV Testing and Linkage to Care

On February 25, 2013, the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) jointly released a Dear Colleague letter to clarify federal policy regarding HIV testing and linkage to Ryan White-funded care and treatment services. The intent of the RWHAP and a main goal of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) is to quickly link individuals who are potentially eligible for Ryan White-funded services to Ryan White-funded medical care.

Based on this guidance, effective immediately, persons who conduct HIV testing should counsel an individual who receives one positive rapid test result about the likelihood of HIV infection and the real but small possibility of a false positive result. The individual should then be linked to an HIV care provider. The Department of Health (DOH) approved rapid test sites routinely submit confirmatory specimens to the state laboratory; however, these results may not reach the HIV clinic before the patient's first visit. County health department clinics should be able to access these confirmed results internally. HIV testing sites that do not obtain confirmatory testing should have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with a Ryan White-funded program or other HIV care provider to facilitate the timely linkage of patients to HIV medical care and to accelerate the receipt of an appointment for those whose preliminary test is positive. The receiving medical clinic must be informed of the individual's unconfirmed preliminary positive HIV test result and the need for confirmation.

Ryan White-funded clinics that receive individuals with a preliminary positive result should arrange an abbreviated first appointment during which time the individual should receive counseling about their HIV test results, a limited evaluation that may include confirmatory HIV testing and other HIV labs. Health departments are encouraged to work with HIV testing providers and Ryan White-funded and other care providers to develop an MOU that will address confirmatory testing and linkage to care procedures.

Florida Department of Health

Division of Disease Control and Health Protection • Bureau of
Communicable Diseases
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-09 • Tallahassee, FL 32399-1715
PHONE: 850/245-4335 • FAX: 850/245-4920

www.FloridasHealth.com

TWITTER: HealthyFLA
FACEBOOK: FLDepartmentofHealth
YOUTUBE: fldoh

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Staff in the HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section is currently updating the Florida Ryan White Part B HIV/AIDS Eligibility Procedures Manual to reflect that eligibility and case management appointments may be scheduled while waiting for confirmatory test results. This program notice is in effect until the Eligibility Procedures Manual is updated.

According to the policy memo from HRSA and CDC, the Ryan White legislation does not require a confirmed diagnosis of HIV prior to engagement with Ryan White-funded medical care. To be eligible for Ryan White-funded medical care, patients must have a "diagnosis of HIV disease" (Sections 2604(c)(1), 2611, 2651(c)(1) and 2671(a) of the Public Health Service Act). There is no legislative requirement for a "confirmed" HIV diagnosis prior to linkage to Ryan White-funded medical care. Testing to confirm a diagnosis of HIV infection may be performed by Ryan White-funded or other medical providers.

Tests to confirm the diagnosis of HIV disease could include the following for purposes of Ryan White eligibility only:

- Positive HIV immunoassay and positive HIV Western blot
- Positive HIV immunoassay and detectable HIV RNA
- Two positive HIV immunoassays (should be different assays based on different antigens or different principles)

The memo makes it clear that having a positive result from only one HIV antibody test should not be a barrier to linkage to a Ryan White-funded clinic, or other HIV care provider, since the vast majority of people receiving a positive result from a single test have HIV infection and would benefit from quick linkage to ongoing care and prevention services. The overarching goal is to diagnose and quickly link persons with HIV into high-quality medical care, consistent with the Early Identification of Individuals with HIV/AIDS initiative, as required in the Ryan White legislation, and as specified in the National HIV/AIDS Strategy. The goal is to: "Establish a seamless system to immediately link people to continuous and coordinated quality care when they are diagnosed with HIV."

The Florida Department of Health, HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis Section encourages each area to establish an effective process to achieve linking newly diagnosed clients into medical care within their local system of care. Ryan White funded lead agencies working in collaboration with local counseling and testing sites should establish an MOU and a local policy for sharing client information to ensure prompt linkage and access to medical care.

If you have further questions about this matter, please contact Joe May at (850) 245-4444 ext. 4421, or Marlene LaLota at (850) 245-4444 Ext. 4423.

cc: Ryan White Part A Administrators
Ryan White Part C Programs