

Paving the Way for Policy: Routine HIV Screening in Texas Medical Care Settings

In 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued [revised recommendations to integrate routine HIV screening for all patients in healthcare settings for all persons aged 13 to 64 years](#). The guidelines were issued to address the following problems:

- 1) People accessing health care are not routinely tested for HIV. For each person not tested, another opportunity is lost to detect, treat, and reduce HIV transmissions;
- 2) One in six people with HIV in the U.S. do not know they are infected; and
- 3) Many persons are not diagnosed until they have been living with HIV and unknowingly continue to expose others for many years.

In April, 2013 the [United States Preventive Services Task Force \(USPSTF\) released a Grade A recommendation for HIV screening](#) stating clinicians should screen for HIV infection in:

- 1) adolescents and adults aged 15 to 65 years,
- 2) younger adolescents and older adults who are at increased risk, and
- 3) all pregnant women including those who present at labor who are untested and whose HIV status is unknown.

The USPSTF found convincing evidence that identification and treatment of HIV infection is associated with a markedly reduced risk for progression to AIDS, AIDS–related events, and death in individuals with advanced disease, CD4 count < 200 cells/mm³ (normal CD4 count = 500 – 1,000 cells/mm³).

Routine HIV screening can lead to early diagnosis and is associated with:

- Better health outcomes and longer survival.
- More cost effective and better treatment choices.
- Lower viral loads.
- Reduction of risk behaviors.
- Reduced sexual transmissions.

Texas law supports routine screening:

- Texas does not require a separate consent form for HIV testing.
- General consent for medical care includes HIV screening.
- Documented verbal (informed) consent is sufficient.
- Pretest counseling is not required.

DSHS HIV routine screening programs progress through December 2014:

- DSHS has supported routine screening in over 27 healthcare organizations including 15 emergency departments, 14 primary care/community health centers including family planning, 4 STD clinics, and 9 correctional facilities.
- Over 1,070,622 HIV tests have been performed.
- Over 9,882 HIV cases have been identified.

The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and the Test Texas HIV Coalition is committed to supporting expanded, routine, integrated and sustainable HIV screening in health care settings by:

- Supporting promotion through peer advocacy.
- Examining ways to create policy and practice guidelines within public health.

Providing training and technical assistance.