

7. Professional Issues

Professional Training and Support

All counsellors providing pre- and post-test counselling should be appropriately trained, and programs should provide support for counsellors to help them cope with the stress of giving positive test results.

Individuals providing HIV test counselling should have the following skills:

- belief that counselling can make a difference
- genuine interest in the counselling process.
- active listening skills
- ability to use open-ended questions.
- ability and comfort with using an interactive negotiating style (rather than a persuasive approach)
- ability to create a supportive atmosphere and build trust with the client
- interest in learning new counselling and skill-building techniques
- knowledge about HIV transmission risks.
- comfort discussing HIV risk behaviours (i.e., explicit sex or drug behaviours)
- ability to remain focussed on risk-reduction goals.

Whenever possible, counsellors should have completed standard training courses in client-centred HIV prevention counselling or other risk-reduction counselling models. They should also have opportunities to attend testing conferences or workshops, when available.

Supervision

Counsellors should have adequate supervision and support, including regular opportunities to debrief after difficult or challenging counselling sessions.

Case conferences — or regularly scheduled (e.g., monthly) meetings of counsellors — allow counsellors to learn from one another and give supervisors more insight into counsellors' skills and needs. The meetings can reduce the risk of burnout by giving counsellors an opportunity to discuss difficult or challenging issues.

Agencies may also consider establishing a practice of direct observation of counselling sessions (with client consent). Supervisors or peers can observe counselling sessions and provide constructive feedback. Agencies that use this approach report that it is useful in enhancing skills and that clients rarely refuse. Suggested timeframe for observation is twice monthly for the first six months, monthly for the second six months, and quarterly for counsellors with more than one year's experience. Counsellors should receive feedback from an observation within a week of the counselling session.

Evaluation

Anonymous testing programs should establish some regular mechanism to evaluate client satisfaction with HIV testing and counselling (e.g., evaluation surveys). Evaluations should be done by someone other than the counsellors and need only be done occasionally (e.g., for 1 to 2 weeks, once or twice a year) to obtain enough information to identify any problems or opportunities for improvement.

The Intake Form (see Appendix A) can be used to gather information on who is coming to the program for testing.

Sample Anonymous Testing Intake Form

DATE: _____ **AT Number:** _____

First name only: _____

Year of birth: _____

Age: _____

City: _____

Comments:

Gender:

- Female
- Male
- Transgender (F to M)
- Transgender (M to F)
- Non-identifying

Have you been to the clinic before?

- Yes No

How did you hear about the clinic?

- Word of mouth/friend
- Other agency
- Phone hotline
- School
- Media
- Doctor/dentist
- Internet/website
- Ads
- Other

We would like to know whether our anonymous testing program is reaching people from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds. Please help us by checking the ethnocultural group you identify with.

- Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit, Métis)
- African Caribbean
- East Asian Middle Eastern
- Other Black /Arab Eastern
- South Asian Middle Eastern
- White/European Other

What is your preferred language?

Have you been tested for HIV before?

- Yes No

If yes, when was your last test?

Risk History

Are your usual sex partners?

Male Female Both Transgendered

What type of STI protection do you use?

None Male condom
 Female condom Dental dam
 Other

How often do you use condoms?

All the time Most times
 Sometimes Never

Have you ever shared sex toys?

Yes No Unsure

Do you use street drugs

(e.g., cocaine, heroin, crystal meth)?

Yes No Unsure

Do you share needles?

Never Sometimes
 Most times All the time

Do you share pipes, straws or other works?

Never Sometimes
 Most times All the time

Does/do your sex partner/s share needles,
pipes, straws, or other works?

Yes No Unsure

Do you have any of the following risks?

Tattooing Body piercing
 Cutting/slashing

Have you had a workplace exposure

(e.g., needle-stick injury)?

Yes No Unsure

Health History

Have you had any of the following infections?

Chlamydia Gonorrhea
 Urethritis Herpes
 Syphilis Genital warts/HPV
 Trichomonas Hepatitis A
 Hepatitis B Hepatitis C
 Molluscum Yeast
 Bacterial Vaginosis Infections
 Parasites

Have you received?

Hep A vaccination: Yes No

Hep B vaccination: Yes No

When were you last tested for sexually
transmitted infections?

Other

Do you have any other concerns about
sex (e.g., orgasm, masturbation, painful
penetration), sexuality (e.g., identity,
orientation), or abuse or assault?

Yes No

Would you like any referrals to help deal with
any issues?

Yes No Unsure

AIDS Hotline

416-392-2437 or 1-800-668-2437

French: 1-800-267-7432

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/hiv/providers>

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