

# HIV Antibody Testing

## HIV Testing Supported by the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Disease Prevention

### State and Federally Funded Anonymous Testing

Anonymous test sites are located in every region of the state to afford HIV testing opportunities for those persons who are reluctant to provide their identity at confidential test sites. Over the past decade, the use of anonymous test sites has declined significantly as more individuals have gained comfort with testing in confidential settings and/or have taken the opportunity to test with rapid or oral tests in community settings.

### HIV Prevention Cooperative Agreement

Funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) support health department testing for STD, Maternity and TB clients, and other high-risk clients, including partners of people with HIV. The funds also support community-based testing targeting men who have sex with men, injection drug users, high risk heterosexuals, homeless, transgender, sex workers and other high-risk persons, with an emphasis on reaching communities of color. This grant does not support mass testing at health fairs, church events, college campuses, etc. Although it would be ideal to offer testing in many of these venues, experience in Virginia has shown very few HIV- infected people have been identified though testing at these sites. In addition, rapid tests used in community settings cost six times more than traditional blood tests. Several years of declining grant funding for direct HIV testing and prevention services limits greater expansion of the testing program.

### HIV Testing in Clinical Settings

This new grant from the CDC is intended to provide routine HIV screening opportunities in clinical settings, with a primary emphasis on reaching African Americans. The grant requires that 80% of funds be targeted to clinical sites. VDH is partnering with hospitals, community health centers and jails in this project. A small portion of grant funds will be used for a social marketing campaign to promote routine HIV testing. The grant also allows for a small portion to be directed towards HIV testing using social network strategies in community-based sites with positivity rates of 2.0% or greater.

## Frequently Asked Questions About HIV Testing in Virginia

The health department wants everyone to get tested but then restricts testing to “high-risk populations.” Aren’t you sending out a mixed message?

The 2006 CDC guidelines that encourage an HIV test for everyone between the ages of 13 and 64 are specific to testing in medical settings. The guidelines address HIV screening during primary care, emergency room visits, etc., but were not intended for community-based testing or testing in

non-clinical settings. CDC plans to release additional guidelines to address targeted testing of high-risk populations in non-clinical settings. The reality is that the public health system does not have the resources to pay for HIV testing of everyone between 13 and 64. Multiple payment options including private insurance and Medicaid will have to be utilized to fully address CDC's goal.

Is consent for HIV testing still required in Virginia?

No. As of July 1, 2008, Virginia law requires that that medical provider inform the client that an HIV test is planned, provide information about the test and advise the client that they have the right to decline the test prior to performing HIV testing.

Why does VDH give test kits to some agencies but not others?

VDH provides rapid and oral test kits only to agencies funded under the Community HIV Testing Grant, and to other HIV prevention contractors with a consistent history of meeting contractual and reporting requirements. VDH takes reporting, quality assurance and confidentiality of HIV testing very seriously. VDH is able to monitor only those agencies with which it has a contractual and financial relationship. Test kits are not provided to other community-based organizations (CBOs) because VDH is unable to ensure that testers have received proper training, tests are conducted according to protocol, results will be provided and secured to ensure confidentiality, and that HIV infection is reported in accordance with state laws and regulations.

Why isn't rapid testing available in all areas?

VDH began offering rapid testing through CBOs and some health departments in 2004. The number of rapid tests conducted has increased every year since then; however, the high cost of rapid testing and a decline in both federal and state HIV prevention funding has slowed further expansion. The new CDC testing grant will make additional rapid testing available in some areas.

Do I have to be a citizen or legal resident to get an HIV test?

No. Proof of citizenship or documented immigration status is not required for HIV testing. You may be asked for, but are not required to give, a social security number. It is better not to give a social security number than to provide a false one or to use a number that belongs to someone else.

Where can I get information about test sites?

Call the HIV, STD and Viral Hepatitis Hotline at 800-533-4148 Monday - Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Counselors can assist in finding a test site near you.



[www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/diseaseprevention](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/diseaseprevention)

