

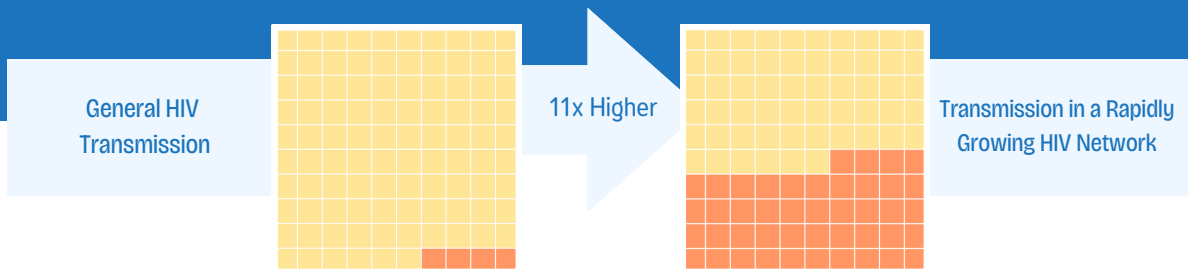


CLUSTER DETECTION AND RESPONSE

PROVIDER FACT SHEET

WHAT IS AN HIV CLUSTER?

A group of people in a sexual or social network or in a geographic location who are affected by rapid HIV transmission. If clusters are known, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) provides additional support and resources to communities and people who urgently need them.



HOW DO WE FIND CLUSTERS OF HIV?



MOLECULAR SURVEILLANCE

Molecular analysis is the main method of identifying clusters. Health care providers conduct drug resistance testing as a routine part of HIV clinical care to find the best HIV medication for their patients. This test generates genetic sequences from the virus (not the person). Because HIV is constantly evolving, people whose viruses are genetically similar may be closely linked. Groups of people with similar genetic sequences are often referred to as a "cluster".



TIME-SPACE CLUSTERS

A time-space cluster might be found when a higher-than-expected number of new HIV cases are diagnosed in a geographic location. Public Health tracks patterns in new HIV diagnoses across the 26 health districts in LA County. Time-space clusters need further investigation because they may indicate an increase in HIV testing that led to new diagnoses of older infections.



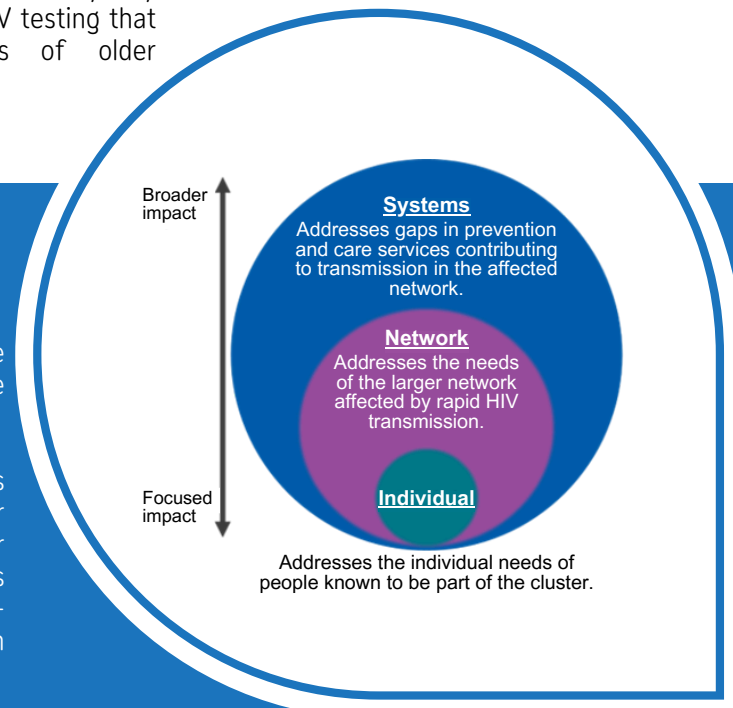
PROVIDER/COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION

Medical providers, Public Health staff, or community partners may notice an unusual increase in HIV diagnoses among a specific group of people and alert Public Health.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CLUSTER IS DETECTED?

When rapid transmission of HIV is happening, it's a sign to us that there are gaps in HIV prevention services that may need to be addressed at the individual, network, and systems levels.

For smaller clusters, Public Health primarily responds to the individuals affected by the cluster by providing linkage or relinkage to care, partner services, service and care referrals, and transportation assistance. For larger clusters, Public Health may implement network-level interventions including new or expanded services within a community or area. Systems-level interventions focus on structural and social determinants of health through programming and policies.



Systems

Addresses gaps in prevention and care services contributing to transmission in the affected network.

Network

Addresses the needs of the larger network affected by rapid HIV transmission.

Individual

Addresses the individual needs of people known to be part of the cluster.

HOW IS INDIVIDUALS' INFORMATION PROTECTED?

Public Health is required to report de-identified HIV data to the CDC. Names and other identifying information are never included.

Only a small number of authorized staff have access to HIV cluster data. Personal Identifying Information (PII) is NOT shared outside Public Health or with other government entities.

Public Health complies with comprehensive security and confidentiality protocols that adhere to all State and Federal laws and CDC requirements.

WHAT SHOULD PROVIDERS DO?

- Per Federal guidelines for HIV clinical care, order genotype HIV drug-resistance testing when a patient is newly diagnosed or experiences virologic failure.
- If Public Health reaches out to request your assistance in responding to a cluster affecting your patient population, work with Public Health to help improve patient outcomes and solicit partners at increased risk of HIV infection.
- As a standard practice:
 - Perform routine HIV testing as part of health screenings.
 - Inform people about Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) – a medicine taken to prevent HIV acquisition.
 - Encourage patients living with HIV to adhere to treatment, since people living with HIV who are taking antiretroviral therapy medications and have an undetectable viral load have **NO RISK** of sexually transmitting HIV to others. Remember Undetectable = Untransmittable.

Tell patients that have tested positive for HIV:

1

Their HIV test results and associated labs (CD4, viral load, and drug-resistance tests) are reported to Public Health.

2

Public Health may contact the patient to offer services and assist with anonymously notifying their partners that someone they've had contact with has tested positive for HIV.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU'VE NOTICED A CLUSTER?

If you suspect an increase in new diagnoses in your area or clinic, please report this spike to EHEInitiative@ph.lacounty.gov or call (213) 351-8516. Please include information on your location and any additional details about the increase in diagnoses including trends in demographics or risk patterns.

RESOURCES

