

# VA HIV Testing Information for Health Care Providers



## Why is HIV testing so important?

- ▶ Early diagnosis of HIV is associated with greatly improved medical outcomes. In addition, a patient's knowledge of his or her HIV status may substantially reduce his or her risk of transmitting the virus.
- ▶ VA is the largest single provider of HIV care in the United States, providing care to more than 31,000 Veterans with HIV in 2018. Yet, only 44 percent of Veterans in VA care have been tested for HIV.
- ▶ Our goal is to diagnose HIV infection as early as possible so that Veterans can receive care for their HIV and remain healthy for many years to come.

## What is VA's policy on HIV testing?

- ▶ VA HIV testing for patients is voluntary.
- ▶ Veterans must be given the opportunity to ask questions. After all questions have been answered, Veterans may give verbal consent. VA does not require written consent, documentation of consent, or scripted pre-/post-test counseling.
- ▶ Under Public Law 115-182 (the MISSION Act), HIV-related information may be disclosed without written authorization from the Veteran to a non-Department entity for purposes of providing health care, including hospital care, medical services, and extended care services, to patients or performing other health care-related activities or functions.

## Which patients should be tested for HIV? How often?

- ▶ In line with current CDC recommendations, VA supports HIV testing as part of routine medical care for all Veterans. Any patient without documentation of an HIV test result in their health record should be offered a test.
- ▶ We encourage all Veterans to get tested at least once.
- ▶ Patients documented to be HIV negative but who have ongoing risk factors should be offered an HIV test at least annually. Patients at risk should be considered for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP). Learn more at [www.hiv.va.gov](http://www.hiv.va.gov).

## Whose responsibility is it to test patients for HIV?

- ▶ VA encourages all providers (especially those in primary care, mental health, and substance use clinics) to routinely offer HIV testing to all of their patients.

## Where can I find more information?

[www.hiv.va.gov](http://www.hiv.va.gov)



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
HIV, Hepatitis, & Related Conditions Programs