

# HIV CARE CONTINUUM INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS



## WHAT IS THE HIV CARE CONTINUUM?

The HIV care continuum shows the five key steps in treating Veterans with HIV. The ultimate goal of the HIV care continuum is to help more Veterans with HIV achieve virologic suppression.

1. **HIV Diagnosis**—Getting an HIV test is the only way to confirm HIV status. VA's goal is for every Veteran to be tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime. If a Veteran does not know they have HIV they cannot receive the necessary care they need to stay healthy and can unknowingly spread the virus to others.
2. **Getting linked to care**—If a Veteran tests positive for HIV, it is important that you help connect him/ her to care and counseling as soon as possible.
3. **Staying in care**—There is no cure for HIV, so patients must receive lifetime treatment to stay healthy.
4. **Getting antiretroviral therapy**—Recommend antiretroviral therapy (ART) to your HIV positive Veterans. It involves a combination of three or more drugs daily to control and prevent HIV from replicating.
5. **Viral suppression**—By receiving ART, patients can achieve virologic suppression. Although this is not a cure, lower HIV levels will keep Veterans healthier, help them live longer, and greatly reduce the chance of the virus being passed to others.

Currently, only 30% of Americans who are HIV positive are virologically suppressed. Identifying HIV positive persons and improving the administration of care will increase the number of persons retained in care. Someday soon, we may be able to welcome a new generation into an AIDS-free world.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

- **Make a goal to have every Veteran get tested for HIV.** Encourage every Veteran you treat, especially those who engage in high risk behavior, to get tested.
- **Educate your patients and reduce stigma.** Stigma and discrimination prevent people from getting tested and receiving treatment. Inform your patients about the disease, risk factors, and available treatments, and explain what it means to be HIV positive.
- **Keep negatives negative.** Even after your patient has tested negative for HIV, ensure that they understand how to maintain a healthy, low-risk lifestyle.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Visit [www.hiv.va.gov/provider](http://www.hiv.va.gov/provider) for more information, resources, and materials.

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