

# Confidential HIV testing: Key messages

## Purpose

This document is to help HIV test counselors promote confidential HIV testing and address fears about how client information is used and protected.

## Background

In July 2014, the Oregon Health Authority will require publicly-funded HIV testing to be conducted confidentially. This policy already is in place in 12 other states and territories. Confidential HIV testing includes collecting names and other identifying information. This is a standard practice that helps health systems keep both their clients and the larger community healthy. Anonymous testing is not available for most health conditions.

Public health agencies are better able to ensure clients receive their HIV test results and access care and Partner Services if they have access to client names and contact information. Confidential HIV testing also helps reduce stigma, normalize testing and foster trust in public health agencies. Research suggests that HIV testing rates do not decline when names are collected or reported to health departments.

This requirement was approved by the Conference of Local Health Officials based on findings from an ad hoc Confidential HIV Testing Workgroup, which included representatives from funded agencies and the Oregon HIV/Viral Hepatitis/Sexually Transmitted Infection Integrated Planning Group. The requirement will be included in Program Element #07 of the contract with local health departments that receive HIV prevention funding from the Oregon Health Authority.



## Key messages

HIV test counselors are encouraged to use or adapt the following talking points to help clients who are concerned about confidential testing.

## Confidentiality

- Your test result is confidential. We protect and limit access to client information according to state law.
- Generally, your HIV test result may only be shared with you, our agency, a health department or a health care provider. It's up to you whether you choose to tell anyone else.
- We cannot tell your employer that you tested or your test result. Employment discrimination based on HIV status is illegal.

## Data use

- Health departments collect information about people who test positive to watch trends in the epidemic and to help connect people with services.
- If you test positive, health department staff will contact you to:
  1. Be sure you received your test result
  2. Offer assistance accessing health care or case management
  3. Ask for help identifying partners who should be notified of their potential exposure and encouraged to get tested. You could either notify partners yourself or ask public health staff to notify them without sharing your name.
- Under the Affordable Care Act, health insurers cannot deny coverage or charge more based on HIV status or other pre-existing conditions.



## Referrals

- If a client would like to test anonymously, refer them to sources such as OraQuick.com or Walgreens where they can purchase a home HIV test.