

Best Practices for Delivering HIV Test Results: You Matter

William Hight, Ph.D.

Consultant Faculty, Southeast AETC

Licensed Psychologist, Clinical Asst. Professor, Dept. of Psychiatry and
Health Behavior, Medical College of Georgia, Augusta University

Learning Objectives

- By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:
 - Identify 3 important steps in preparing to deliver HIV test results;
 - Identify 3 considerations in delivering HIV test results with compassion;
 - List 3 pieces of information to cover with clients who have reactive HIV test results.

Disclosures

- I have no real or perceived interest in any products that may be discussed during this presentation.
 - William Hight, Ph.D.
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The Agenda

- Preparing . . .
 - . . . Yourself. . . Your Site. . . Your Client
- Focus on Reactive Results: The Process, The Content
 - Preliminary Positive
 - Confirmed Positive
- Focus on Negative Results
 - Avoiding the Pitfalls of “Good” News
- Invalid Results
- Linkage and Referrals

Preparing Yourself

- **HIV Knowledge**

Preparing Yourself

- HIV Knowledge
- **Testing Knowledge**

Preparing Yourself

- HIV Knowledge
- Testing Knowledge
- **Communication Skills**

Preparing Yourself

- HIV Knowledge
- Testing Knowledge
- Communication Skills
- **Materials to Share**

Preparing Yourself

- HIV Knowledge
- Testing Knowledge
- Communication Skills
- Materials to Share
- **Self-care**

Preparing Your Site



Preparing Your Site

- **Private Location**

Preparing Your Site

- Private Location
- **Notify other staff as needed (including CDS for confirmed positive results)**

Preparing Your Site

- Private Location
- Notify other staff as needed (including CDS for confirmed positive results)
- **Know (or establish) protocol for difficult situations**

Preparing Your Client



Preparing Your Client

- **Assess readiness for testing**

Preparing Your Client

- Assess readiness for testing
- **Explain testing process**

Preparing Your Client

- Assess readiness for testing
- Explain testing process
- **Explain possible results – this may be your best teachable moment!**

Providing Results

Delivering Reactive Results:

Delivering Reactive Results

The Process

- Assess readiness: *“Are you ready to look at your results with me?”*
- Use the client's name. It personalizes the interaction and grounds the client.
- Everyone reacts differently. Make no assumptions. Don't be more distraught than the client.

The Process Continued

- Avoid jargon and words like “antibodies.”
- Avoid qualifiers like “it seems that . . .” Anything that creates confusion is less kind in the long run.
- Use tone of voice and body language to convey genuine concern and compassion. People will remember a caring nature more than specific words.

The Process Continued

- **Attend** to client's verbal and non-verbal reactions.
- **Pause** to allow client to take in the results and respond.
- **Engage** with offers of help, e.g. "I'm here when you're ready to talk" or "Can you tell me what you're thinking?"
- **Reflect** feelings, e.g. "I can tell this is a real shock for you."
- **Acknowledge** the impact -- don't try to "fix" the feelings.

The Process Continued

- **Respond** to their questions within your ability. Don't overload with information.
- **Inform** clients that, while there will be significant life changes involved, there is support for each step.
- **Be sure to:**
 - **Explore their plans for when they leave your office, including disclosure issues, and**
 - **Arrange for future contact in next day or two.**

Preliminary Positive

The Content

- The result almost always means that a person has HIV.
- Explain the need for confirmatory test.
- Frame “preliminary” based on client reaction.
- Focus on HIV as a manageable disease.
- Explore decision re: healthy disclosure.
- Address prevention. U=U
- Verbally “contract” with client re: returning for results.

Preliminary Positive Sample Scripts

- *“(Name) ,your HIV test result today is preliminarily positive. . . . As we discussed, this almost always means that a person has HIV. This is such important information that we will do a second test.”*
- Allow time for the news to sink in. Focus on offering emotional support. This is as important as anything else you do. The patient may not be able to concentrate on what you say, nor be receptive to the support and advice you offer.

Preliminary Positive

Sample Scripts

- *"Based on these results, it's important to take steps now to prevent spreading HIV to people you have sex with (or share needles). It's also important to protect yourself from getting other infections. Let's plan for how you can do that until your next visit."*
- *"Let's talk about your plans for the rest of the day, and whether you plan to share this information with anyone."*
- *"Emotional support can be important while you wait for the confirmatory results. I'd like to help you plan for getting that support if you feel like you need it?"*

Confirmed Positive

The Content

- This result means that a person has HIV.
- Focus on HIV as a manageable disease. “HIV is not the death sentence it used to be”
- Even if they feel fine, the virus is active, and early care is important and effective.
- HIV can be transmitted to others. Reinfection is possible.
- Revisit Prevention Counseling in light of diagnosis.

Confirmed Positive

The Content

- Discuss Disclosure.
- Discuss Partner Notification.
- Other legal issues.
- Facilitate meeting with CDS.
- Know and follow through on your role in Linkage to Care !

Confirmed Positive

Sample Scripts

- *"Are you ready to go over your test results with me? (Insert patient's name), your test shows that you have HIV."*
 - Allow time for the news to be absorbed and attend to the patient's emotional response. Caring for emotional needs is the **most important part** of this encounter, and may account for most of the time you spend with the patient.
- *"Today we can take some time to talk about what these results mean to you, your reactions, how you can get support, and make an appointment with a healthcare provider."*

Confirmed Positive Sample Scripts

- *"HIV is a virus that weakens a person's immune system. While HIV can lead to AIDS, this test doesn't say whether or not you have AIDS. Other tests can tell how strong your immune system is and what medicines are best to keep you healthy. With the medicines we have today, many people with HIV are leading very healthy lives, and living as long as if they didn't have HIV."*

Confirmed Positive Sample Scripts

- *Having HIV involves a lot of life changes, but there's time to deal with them one at a time, and there's support each step of the way. HIV isn't the death sentence it used to be. Many people can live as long as they would if they didn't have HIV – if they take care of themselves.”*
- *“You matter and what happens to you matters. I want to make sure you see a good and caring provider.”*

Confirmed Positive Sample Scripts

- *While there is no cure for HIV, I want you to know that having an HIV diagnosis today is not like it was 15 years ago. There are many good medicines. In fact, some doctors think of HIV the same as any chronic disease, such as diabetes. With regular medical care and some lifestyle changes, people with HIV can live long and full lives.”*
- *“We can help you connect with excellent doctors and programs that take care of people infected with HIV. They can help you with your medical care, provide emotional support, and help you make decisions about sharing this information.”*

Confirmed Positive Sample Scripts

- *“Many people with HIV make changes to protect themselves and others. Let’s talk about how you plan to keep others, and yourself, safe.”*
- *“It’s important for you to be aware that people with HIV are required by law to inform any future sex or needle partners of their HIV status before having sex or sharing needles with them. It is also important not to donate blood, tissue, or sperm.”*

Confirmed Positive Sample Scripts

- **HIV Reporting:** *"The health department safeguards the names of all patients testing HIV positive. This list is kept safe and not shared. It is used by the health department to know how many people in an area have HIV, so that resources can be made available."*
- **Partner Notification:** *"It's important to give other people who may have HIV a chance to have a test. The health department encourages everyone with HIV to tell their present and past sex (and needle sharing) partners so they can be tested. You can tell them yourself, or you can give their names to the health department staff. They will notify your partners that they may have been exposed, without using your name."*



- How would you respond to the following client reaction?
- How would your response differ for preliminary vs. confirmed results?

“What? No, no that’s not right. I can’t have AIDS. Something’s wrong. This test is wrong, I mean I feel fine, something’s wrong with the test. There has to be.”

Negative Results

- While this is the “good” and “easier” result to deliver, it involves:
 - Responsibility – The counselor must make sure the client doesn’t misinterpret the results, and
 - Opportunity – to discuss prevention and to connect the client to prevention programs in the area.

How NOT to Deliver Negative Results . . .

- *A Personal Experience*

Negative Results

The Process

- Allow the client to celebrate the good news.
- Ask client to explain what they understand the results to mean.
- Elicit and praise any previous/current risk reduction strategies.
- Discuss strategies to maintain and/or enhance risk reduction.

Negative Results

The Content

- No signs of HIV found at this time
- A recent infection may not show up (for POC tests, past 3 months, rarely 6 months. Know the guidelines for your site and test): Implications for future testing
- Does not imply immunity
- Does not mean that engaging in the same activities won't lead to infection in the future
- Discuss prevention/risk reduction
- Offer referral to local prevention programs as appropriate

Negative Results

Sample Scripts

- *“Are you ready to discuss your HIV test results? Your HIV test came back negative, which means there was no sign of HIV infection at this time. If you have had unprotected sex or shared needles in the last (3 months), it is still possible that you are infected with HIV. In that case, another test (3 months) after you last exposure would be important. We can look at a calendar to figure out when you need another test.”*

Negative Results

Sample Scripts

- *“Even though this test is negative, you can get HIV in the future if you do not protect yourself during sex by using condoms and discussing HIV risks with your partner(s). It is a good idea to get an HIV test at least once a year if you have sex, especially unprotected, or share needles.”*

Negative Results Sample Scripts

- *“Many people decide to make sure they stay negative after getting these results. May I talk with you about how you can do that?”*

Briefly:

- Invalid Rapid Test:
 - Do not discuss the possibility beforehand.
 - Assure client that it says nothing about their status.
 - Explain that the result is a built in quality check of the test device.
 - Apologize for the frustration and time.

■ Questions?

- **A SINCERE
“THANK YOU”
FOR THE WORK
YOU DO**

AETC Program National Centers and HIV Curriculum

- **National Coordinating Resource Center** – serves as the central web –based repository for AETC Program training and capacity building resources; its website includes a free virtual library with training and technical assistance materials, a program directory, and a calendar of trainings and other events. Learn more: <https://aidsetc.org/>
- **National Clinical Consultation Center** – provides free, peer-to-peer, expert advice for health professionals on HIV prevention, care, and treatment and related topics. Learn more: <https://nccc/ucsf.edu>
- **National HIV Curriculum** – provides ongoing, up –to-date HIV training and information for health professionals through a free, web –based curriculum; also provides free CME credits, CNE contact hours, CE contact hours, and maintenance of certification credits. Learn more: www.hiv.uw.edu