



# Quick Start Guide for Routine HIV Testing

## INTRODUCTION

### What is the Get Tested Coachella Valley campaign?

Get Tested Coachella Valley is a new public health initiative driven by a coalition of more than 75 community partners, including the Riverside County Department of Public Health, Riverside County Medical Association, our region's three major hospitals, and many local clinics and providers. The campaign is dedicated to dramatically reducing the spread of HIV by making voluntary HIV testing standard and routine medical practice; making HIV testing and HIV care available to all; and, educating the community on how to protect their health and prevent infection.

### Why are hospitals and clinics committed to this program?

Routine HIV testing for all American adults and adolescents is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally:

- Over half of Coachella Valley residents have never been tested for HIV.
- One in eight Americans with HIV does not know they are infected, increasing the chance they will spread the virus to others.
- The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the Coachella Valley is over twice the national rate—putting everyone at greater risk.

### Why is routine HIV testing critically important to the health of our patients and community?

A person can have the HIV virus for years and not know it. The sooner an HIV positive individual gets onto medication, the longer and healthier life they will have. Once on medication, individuals become 96% less infectious to others.

Testing everyone removes the stigma of only testing some people and not others. Testing everyone eliminates the guessing game of whom to test. You simply can't tell by looking at someone whether or not they should be tested for HIV. Viruses do not discriminate—anyone can get HIV, from adolescents to seniors. We're all at risk.

Your clinic may be the one place that finds that one HIV-positive person no one else did.

### How will your clinic participate?

Beginning on the start date selected, your clinic will begin including an HIV test as a routine standard of care for all patients.



## How to Implement Routine Testing

### Step-by-Step Guide

#### **Step One: Introduce Get Tested Coachella Valley to All Clinic Staff**

At your next monthly meeting or daily huddle:

- Inform all staff that as part of your clinic's partnership with the Get Tested Coachella Valley campaign, voluntary HIV testing will now be a standard of care.
- Distribute the following items to each staff member:
  1. Overview of the Initiative
  2. FAQ About HIV Testing
  3. "Ask Me" buttons (and "Pregúntame" buttons for Spanish speakers)
- Announce the date of the Getting Started presentation and the start date for routine testing.

#### **Step Two: Getting Started Presentation**

This lively, interactive presentation for all providers and staff covers all the essential information and guidelines, easy implementation process and best practices in 30-60 minutes. We're happy to present to several groups and to provide lunch if it fits your team's schedule!

#### **Step Three: Display Materials in Your Clinic**

Display the following items in your clinic reception area and patient exam rooms:

1. **"Proud Partner" tabletop sign**  
Display prominently in reception area
2. **"To Our Patients" and "A Nuestros Pacientes" statements in acrylic stands**  
Place on reception desk and side tables in reception area
3. **"Request the Test" and "Solicita la Prueba" cards in acrylic stands**  
Place on reception desk, side tables in reception area, and in patient exam rooms
4. **Wall Posters**  
Use Command Picture Hanging Strips to affix posters to walls in reception area and or patient exam rooms. (These hold strongly and remove cleanly with no damage to paint or walls.)



#### **Step Four: Inform Reception Desk Staff**

To comply with State of California regulations, every patient must be informed about an HIV test (in writing and/or verbally) and give their consent. How is that consent given?

- The first component is the Conditions of Service form that all of your patients already sign.
- The second component is informing the patient. California law requires that patients get certain information either verbally or in writing before receiving an HIV test. Your clinic may use any method you deem appropriate to provide this information to your patients. The simple method we suggest is giving the “HIV Testing Information Sheet” (prepared by the Get Tested Coachella Valley team under the guidance of the State Office of AIDS) to every patient when they check in for their appointment.
- The combination of signing the Conditions of Service and receiving this Information Sheet satisfies the requirement for consent. The law also specifies that an individual has the option to decline an HIV test. Unless a patient does decline, they are considered to have given their consent.

#### **Step Five: Check the Lab Slip Box for “HIV 1 & 2 Test”**

During the exam, it’s easy to order an HIV test for your patient. Just check the box on the lab slip that says “HIV 1 & 2 Test.” (Patients may choose to opt out of HIV testing—but clinics report that this very rarely occurs.)

If your clinic has a staff phlebotomist(s), set-up a blanket authorization for the phlebotomist to add an HIV test to the lab order whenever the provider may have forgotten to include it.

The patient then takes the lab slip to the lab, and the lab performs the test (a conventional blood test) and reports the results back to you along with other test results.

In the vast majority of cases, the test result will be negative—and you will handle this the same way you normally handle the delivery of negative test results for other kinds of tests. On the rare occasion when a test result comes back positive, it’s critically important for your clinic to inform the patient that there are numerous treatment options available and refer patient to follow-up testing and care that may be recommended, including contact information for specialty medical care and psychological services.

Get Tested Coachella Valley Early Intervention Specialists are available to assist your clinic with linkage to care.

**Regarding insurance:**  
in the State of California, by law, the cost of HIV tests is covered by all private insurance. In addition, HIV tests are covered by Medi-Cal, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

**Regarding testing methodology:**  
Some clinics utilize point-of-care HIV tests (for example, an oral swab or finger stick test) to deliver results quickly to patients who do not have an ongoing relationship with the clinic and therefore will be difficult to contact later. A Get Tested Public Health Liaison can help your clinic to further explore these and other testing options.



**For further information and to request additional materials for your clinic, please contact:**

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