



HIV TESTING IN NONCLINICAL SETTINGS: ALIGNING TESTING PROTOCOLS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COUPLES

INTRODUCTION

HIV testing may be offered to individuals or couples in nonclinical settings. This document outlines how the *HIV Testing in Nonclinical Settings* protocol and *Testing Together*, an HIV testing approach for couples, protocol align with each other. While Testing Together has two additional steps, there are considerable similarities between the two protocols. This document may help you identify opportunities to streamline HIV testing activities and policies at your agency.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Intake: For both testing approaches, agencies should review procedures for client intake and assess how the intake process may facilitate the collection of required client data. For *Testing Together*, intake may be the first opportunity to ensure that neither client has been forced or coerced to attend the testing session against their will.

Data Collection: While neither approach is driven by use of a data collection form, information will need to be gathered from all clients. Consider whether there are unique data collection needs for couples versus individuals and whether there may be opportunities to collect data differently, such as during the intake process.

Time: Agencies do need to take into account the additional time required for testing a couple compared to an individual, and consider what adjustments are needed for plans and referrals.

PROTOCOLS: STEP-BY-STEP*



INDIVIDUAL HIV TESTING IN NON-CLINICAL SETTINGS¹

- STEP 1.** Introduce and orient client to session
- STEP 2.** Prepare for and conduct rapid HIV test
- STEP 3.** Conduct brief risk assessment
- STEP 4.** Provide initial results and follow protocols for confirmatory testing
- STEP 5.** Develop care, treatment, and prevention plan based on results
- STEP 6.** Refer and link with medical care, social and behavioral services



TESTING TOGETHER²

- STEP 1.** Introduce Testing Together and obtain concurrence
- STEP 2.** Prepare for and conduct Rapid HIV Test
- STEP 3.** Explore couple's relationship
- STEP 4.** Discuss HIV risk concerns and reasons for seeking HIV testing as a couple
- STEP 5.** Discuss the couple's agreements
- STEP 6.** Provide results
- STEP 7.** Develop care, treatment, and prevention plan based on results
- STEP 8.** Link to follow-up services

¹ CDC. (2019). *HIV testing in nonclinical settings fact sheet*. Retrieved from <https://effectiveinterventions.cdc.gov/docs/default-source/hiv-testing/hiv-testing-core-elements-fact-sheet/hivtestinginnonclinicalsettingsfactsheet.pdf>. Accessed 3/18/19

² CDC. (2019). *Testing together fact sheet*. Retrieved from <https://effectiveinterventions.cdc.gov/en/hiv-testing/group-4/testing-together/core-elements-fact-sheet>. Accessed 3/18/19

STEP-BY-STEP HIV TESTING IN NONCLINICAL SETTINGS & TESTING TOGETHER

INTRODUCE



STEP 1. Introduce and orient client to session



STEP 1. Introduce Testing Together and obtain concurrence

Provide a brief explanation of what will happen during the session and confirm that each client agrees to participate. If they have not yet done so, ask clients to complete consent forms documenting that they understand what will happen during the session and granting permission for the testing agency to confidentially share testing data as legally required for matters of public health safety. In addition to providing general consent, Testing Together clients must also agree to specific conditions related to testing as a couple.

TEST



STEP 2. Prepare for and conduct Rapid HIV Test

Prior to conducting the HIV test, explain the HIV testing process. Ensure you obtain formal consent before collecting specimens. Conduct the test. Explain the possible results of the test (i.e. reactive, non-reactive) and how test results correspond with HIV status (negative, positive). For Testing Together, explain to the couple that their results could be the same (concordant negative/positive) or different (discordant).

ASSESS RISK



STEP 3. Conduct brief risk assessment



STEP 3. Explore couple's relationship

STEP 4. Discuss HIV risk concerns and reasons for seeking Testing Together

STEP 5. Discuss the couple's agreements

Briefly discuss current HIV risks with the client(s). Correct misinformation regarding modes of HIV transmission and the "window period" for re-testing. In Testing Together, discuss risks in terms of the history and type of the couple's relationship, including an overview of their shared agreements about their sexual health.

RESULTS



STEP 4. Provide initial results and follow protocols for confirmatory testing



STEP 6. Provide results

Providing HIV tests results. Confirm client's understanding of the results, and explain the process of retesting and confirmatory testing, as appropriate. For Testing Together results should be delivered with the phrases "Your results are the same..." or "Your results are different..." with the reactive result provided first when necessary.

CARE, TREAT, & PREVENT



STEP 5 (NON-CLINICAL SETTINGS) AND STEP 7 (TESTING TOGETHER)

Develop care, treatment, and prevention plan based on results

Discuss care, treatment, and prevention resources and next steps based on the client's HIV test results. Connect clients with reactive results to medical care as soon as possible, and help them understand their risk of transmitting HIV and options for minimizing those risks. During Testing Together, develop a plan with the couple addressing their individual results and then revisit the couple's agreements and ask if they would like to make changes based on their results.

REFER & LINK



STEP 6. Refer and link with medical care, and social and behavioral services



STEP 8. Link to follow-up services

Ensure clients understand how to access additional services as needed. Make plans for follow-up, specifically for retesting and any other additional support services clients need. Also ensure there is a follow-up plan for clients who decline services at this time, or request additional assistance.

