



Department of Health

Three Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908-5097

TTY: 711
www.health.ri.gov

Date: February 23, 2014

Subject: HIV Return to Care Program to Continue in 2014

Dear Colleagues:

In 2013, the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to implement the new HIV Return to Care Program. When providers identify HIV-positive patients who have dropped out of care, HEALTH staff can help locate and reconnect them to care. Linkage to and retention in medical care to assure viral suppression is a key strategy for eliminating transmission and “Getting to Zero”. Thanks to the progress made in 2013, the Return to Care Program is funded to continue this critical work through December of 2014. Please share with your staff the updated referral form and eligibility criteria.

Eligibility:

An HIV-positive patient residing in Rhode Island is eligible for referral if he or she is:

- Confirmed to be HIV-infected and has not received HIV-related primary medical care within the last six (6) months.
- A newly diagnosed confirmed HIV-infected person who has not been linked to HIV care within 90 days since his or her positive test result, or is deemed to be at high-risk of not being linked to care.
- Any other HIV-infected person deemed by their provider to be at high-risk of not participating in recommended HIV care, regardless of time frame.

Referral Form: Available online at:

www.health.ri.gov/forms/referral/201304ReturnToCareReferralFormForHIVPatients.pdf.

Since January 2013, local HIV providers have provided 164 referrals. Of those:

- 66 patients were found to be out of care and living in Rhode Island.
- 41 (62%) of those patients agreed to return to care.
- Of these 41 patients, 33 (80%) attended at least 1 appointment.
- Of these 33 patients, 25 (76%) attended 2 or more appointments.

Our Disease Intervention Specialists thoroughly investigate all referrals, confirm if the patient is out of care and communicate directly back to the referring provider any known status. As shown by the data above, some referrals (98 in this case) may result in other action, such as updating records. Disposition is also reported back to providers, including when patients are residing in another state, in care at another facility, deceased, incarcerated, or are unable to be located after six months.

For more information or to phone in referrals, contact Carol A. Browning, MS, RN, BC at 222-7542.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Utpala Bandy".

Utpala Bandy, M.D., M.P.H.
Medical and Division Director
Division of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology