HIV Prevention with HIV-positive Individuals
“Prevention with Positives” or “PwP”

What is “Prevention with Positives”? “Prevention with Positives” is an HIV prevention strategy that refers to working with people living with HIV to support their health and wellness as well as to reduce the possibility of HIV transmission to others. This can include behavioral interventions to reduce high-risk sexual and drug injecting behaviors of HIV-positive individuals as well as supporting linkage to care and adherence to antiretroviral therapy. Traditionally, HIV prevention programs have focused on primary prevention, helping people who were HIV-negative to avoid HIV infection. Prevention with Positives interventions are considered secondary prevention because they prevent further transmission from those who already have HIV. Over the last 5-10 years, HIV prevention interventions focusing on Prevention with Positives have garnered more attention and are now an important component of High-Impact HIV Prevention, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) new approach to reducing HIV infections in the United States. (See High-Impact HIV Prevention information sheet for further information.)

Why focus on Prevention with Positives?

1. **Prevention with Positives programs support the health and wellness of HIV-positive individuals.** Being aware of HIV status, receiving support, and having access to high quality care can greatly improve the health, quality of life and lifespan of HIV-positive individuals. Prevention with Positive programs are specifically designed to provide support for the unique needs of HIV-positive individuals.

2. **Harness the effectiveness of antiretroviral medications and reduce drug resistance.** Since Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) was developed in 1995, antiretroviral medications have dramatically improved the health and lifespan of people with HIV. So much so that in March 2012, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released new guidelines for HIV treatment that recommend ART for all HIV-positive individuals, regardless of their CD4 count. Despite these recommendations, not all HIV-positive individuals are linked to care, accessing HIV treatment, or able to adhere to treatment. Poor medication adherence can contribute to drug resistance (meaning that the HIV virus will no longer respond to the medication). People with drug resistant HIV have far fewer treatment options, which can negatively impact their health, quality of life, and lifespan. In addition, if a drug resistant virus is transmitted to another person, the newly-infected person will also be drug-resistant and will also have reduced treatment options. Prevention with Positives programs can help HIV-positive individuals to link to HIV medical care, access HIV treatment, and improve their medication adherence, in order to support their health and wellness as well as the health of others.

3. **Most infected individuals take steps to protect their partners when they learn their status.** Studies have shown that most people do not want to infect other people, and once they know they have HIV, will change their behaviors in order to prevent HIV transmission to others. Prevention with Positive programs help people to know their status and prevent further transmission.

4. **People living with HIV continue to have sexual relations.** Data show that 70% of people continue to have sex after their HIV diagnosis, and the longer they know they are HIV-infected, the more likely they are to be sexually active. However, sexual transmission risks can be reduced. Recent studies have shown that people who are adherent to HIV treatment and have a suppressed viral load are up to 96% less likely to transmit HIV to others. Prevention with Positives programs help HIV-positive individuals to access treatment and take steps to reduce risks to sexual partners.

5. **Specialized prevention programs can best address the needs of those living with HIV.** While some of the basic principles of HIV prevention are the same, HIV-positive individuals have unique social and medical needs. Effective Prevention for Positives programs must be tailored to meet these needs. Ensuring that HIV prevention interventions for HIV-positive individuals are effective in supporting improved health, quality of life, and lifespan of HIV infected individuals as well as reducing HIV transmission and drug resistance is an important reason to emphasize Prevention with Positives programs.
Prevention with Positives Interventions
There are currently several Prevention with Positives interventions with demonstrated effectiveness; new interventions are always being developed and more research into additional effective methods is also needed. Effective Prevention with Positives strategies can include individual, group, community, and structural level interventions.

Individual-level Interventions
Prevention with Positives interventions can target individual behavior change, focusing on promoting, reinforcing, and maintaining healthy behavior for a specific HIV-positive person. These interventions are often one-on-one counseling or case management interventions and tend to be time-intensive but they are also private and can be tailored to meet the needs of a specific person.

Examples of highly effective individual-level Prevention with Positives interventions include: CRCS (Comprehensive Risk Counseling and Services, formerly Prevention Case Management), an intervention where an HIV-positive individuals is assigned to a prevention counselor, who works closely with existing case management systems to support them in changing behaviors and link them to needed support services; CLEAR: a multi-session counseling program that helps HIV-positive clients to improve their health and reduce transmission to others using a holistic model (many organizations are using CLEAR as the structured curriculum for their CRCS interventions); Partner Services, a program that involves supporting people in talking to past sexual and needle-sharing partners to inform them that they may have been exposed to HIV and encourage them to get tested; and Partnership for Health, an intervention that uses message repetition and reinforcement for HIV-positive patients during medical visits; focusing on patient-provider communication.

Many people are using CLEAR as the structured curriculum for their CRCS interventions.

Group-level Interventions
Prevention with Positives interventions can also focus on groups of HIV-positive clients by providing education, risk-reduction counseling, skills-building, and support in a group setting. Some group-level interventions use peers as leaders of intervention activities. Group-level interventions are most suitable for people who are comfortable with being openly HIV-positive, and can be very useful in providing peer support, decreasing stigma and isolation, and allowing for the exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences among HIV-positive individuals.

Examples of highly effective group-level Prevention with Positives interventions include: 1) WILLOW, a four-session, small-group intervention for adult women living with HIV that builds skills, self-efficacy, and coping strategies to reduce life stressors, 2) Healthy Relationships, a 5 session intervention that uses Social Cognitive Theory to build skills and self-efficacy for new behavior, and 3) Together Learning Choices (TLC), an intervention for PLWH ages 13-29, which helps young people increase their use of health care; decrease high-risk sexual behavior, drug, and alcohol use; and improve their quality of life. A full list of behavioral interventions currently being disseminated by CDC is available at www.effectiveinterventions.org

Community-level Interventions
Prevention with Positives interventions can also focus on the community as a whole, and typically combine the use of mass media, community-wide events, peer opinion leaders, and social marketing. They seek to change the attitudes and behaviors of entire communities. When they are successful at changing community norms, community-level interventions can have an extensive impact, especially when used in combination with individual- and group-level interventions.

Examples of effective community-level interventions are Popular Opinion Leader and MPowerment, interventions that train groups of “opinion leaders” to engage in HIV prevention and changing social norms in their communities, as well as social marketing
campaign such as HIV STOPS WITH ME, (picture on previous page), a national campaign that features real HIV-positive people talking about issues in their lives. The campaign focuses on personal strengths and abilities and aims to prevent HIV transmission while also reducing stigma for people living with HIV.

**Structural-level Interventions**

Structural interventions are those designed to remove structural barriers and improve a person’s ability to make healthy choices and prevent the spread of HIV. Structural interventions may address physical, social, cultural, organizational, community, economic, legal, or policy circumstances that affect an individual’s ability to prevent the spread of HIV. Some examples of effective structural-level Prevention with Positives interventions are improving **access to condoms and sterile syringes**, and making **substance use treatment** available to people with HIV.

**Legal and Ethical Issues Associated with Prevention with Positives**

HIV Prevention with Positives programs must recognize their most important commitment is to protecting the health and well-being of the HIV-positive individuals participating in their interventions. This means providing **access to high-quality care and treatment** to help improve health and suppress viral load, **protecting privacy and confidentiality** to prevent discrimination as a result of continuing stigma about HIV, and **promoting shared responsibility** between both HIV-negative and HIV-positive people to prevent the continuing spread of HIV. This is important in all jurisdictions, but particularly in those with laws that criminalize the transmission of HIV, which further contributes to stigma and discrimination against people with HIV and increases the possibility of incarceration due to their HIV-positive status. Without a strong recognition of the unique needs of HIV-positive clients, Prevention with Positives programs risk harming the very populations they intend to support.

**Additional Resources**

Here are some additional Prevention with Positives resources you may wish to consider:

- This informational sheet is accompanied by **online training modules** on Prevention with Positives and other High Impact HIV Prevention topics. Online training modules are available at [http://library.capacity4health.org](http://library.capacity4health.org)
- CDC booklet highlighting **best practices** related to Prevention with Positives interventions: [www.effectiveinterventions.org/Files/BestPractices.pdf](http://www.effectiveinterventions.org/Files/BestPractices.pdf)
- Information about **Partner Services**: [www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/partners/Partner-Services.html](http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/partners/Partner-Services.html)
- The Denver Principles, released by the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA): [www.napwa.org/content/denver-principles-1983-and-today](http://www.napwa.org/content/denver-principles-1983-and-today)
- **HIV STOPS WITH ME**: [www.hivstopswithme.org](http://www.hivstopswithme.org)
- Capacity for Health offers **free, individualized capacity-building assistance**. For more information, contact Capacity for Health at 415-568-3308 or [c4h@apiahf.org](mailto:c4h@apiahf.org)

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