

Medical Appointments for People Living with HIV (PLWH): Guidelines

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Introduction

If a client has tested **HIV-positive and is ready for care, or is a previously diagnosed HIV-positive person who needs to be linked or re-engaged in care**, please use these guidelines along with the [Medical Appointments for People Living with HIV \(PLWH\): Checklist](#) to refer the client to their first medical appointment. The checklist contains sensitive and confidential information and **should not be given to the client**. It is meant for use by the Provider only to facilitate HIV treatment and other essential health and support services.

Give the client a copy of the [Medical Appointments Referral Form](#). Make sure that all key information is included on the referral form and that the client knows how to use and access the referrals.

If the client expresses concerns related to their HIV treatment, care and other services, please refer to the [Client Concerns for People Living with HIV \(PLWH\): Guidelines and Checklist](#).

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Language Access



ASK client:

- “In which language would you be most comfortable speaking to a healthcare provider?”

or

- “Indicate which language you speak.”

Note: The provider should use the language card that allows clients to point to their primary language.

Use this resource from the U.S. government if your agency does not have a language card readily available:

<https://www.lep.gov/ISpeakCards2004.pdf>

- If the preferred language of the client is not English, but they can understand English, ask the following questions, as appropriate:
 - “Would you feel comfortable having me or someone from our agency translate on your behalf?”
 - “Do you have an adult friend or family member with whom you would feel comfortable translating on your behalf?”
 - “Do I have your permission to use our call-in translation service?”



INFORM client:

- Assure client you will arrange for translation services.
- Discuss with client the translation services offered by your organization or through another entity (i.e. call-in translation services, staff translator, etc.).
- Advise client on the importance of selecting someone with whom they feel comfortable disclosing their HIV status and other private health information.

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To DO:

- Refer to your agency's policy regarding translation and the availability of translation services in the client's preferred language.
- Coordinate translation services.
- If client intends on using an adult friend or family member for translation, be sure to have client complete a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy authorization form to authorize the involvement of that individual.

Initiate the Conversation

- Commend the client for making the decision to seek HIV medical treatment.
- Use strengths-based counseling to highlight personal strengths or attributes that may have contributed to their decision (e.g. high regard for personal health, concern for others, etc.).

Making an Appointment



ASK client:

- Ask the client about insurance coverage.



INFORM client:

- Discuss the range of medical care facilities available to the client (e.g. hospital, health center, federally qualified health center, private provider, etc.). From available options, ask the client about their preference on setting type, location, etc. Address any concerns.
- Offer to accompany the client to the medical appointment, or to have a trained peer accompany them. If client refuses, ask the client to consider bringing a family member or friend to whom they have disclosed their HIV status. This individual can accompany them for emotional support, to remind them of questions to ask, and to write down answers.

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- Inform the client about the required HIPAA forms. Discuss the purpose of the form: to provide permission for providers to arrange medical appointments and discuss any healthcare related information with providers, other agencies to whom the client is being referred for services, and/or persons involved in treatment (e.g. family, friend or peer).
- Inform the client that if they do not have identification or insurance, you will assist them in obtaining both. Tell the client that you will confirm whether a medical provider can still see them without having identification or insurance coverage.
- If available, inform the client about your agency's appointment reminder service via text messages, phone calls, or e-mails.



To DO:

- Have the client sign required HIPAA forms.
- If needed, help the client obtain identification or apply for public insurance, or refer them to an agency that provides insurance enrollment assistance.
- Verify that the chosen medical provider (hospital, clinic, medical provider) will accept the clients' insurance and can be seen.
- Make an initial medical appointment for the client and write this information on the checklist.
- Seek client consent to set-up and send appointment reminders.

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Preparing for the Appointment



ASK client:

- Ask the client to confirm who will be accompanying them to their first appointment.



INFORM client:

- Emphasize the benefits of disclosing their HIV status to a trusted individual within their support network that can provide emotional support in times of stress and concern.
- Inform the client what to expect from the first medical appointment or HIV baseline evaluation. Included here is information on the HIV baseline evaluation, lab tests and what to expect:
<https://aidsinfo.nih.gov/education-materials/fact-sheets/21/65/just-diagnosed--next-steps-after-testing-positive-for-hiv>
- Remind the client to bring their identification and insurance card.



To DO:

- In collaboration with the client, generate a list of questions to ask the medical provider:
 - Sample questions (Source: aidsinfo.nih.gov):**
 - Because I have HIV, will I eventually get AIDS?
 - What can I do to stay healthy and avoid getting other infections?
 - How will HIV treatment affect my lifestyle?
 - How should I tell my partner that I have HIV?
 - Is there any reason to tell my employer and those I work with that I have HIV?
 - Are there support groups for people with HIV?
- Remind the client to bring their ID, insurance card, and payment method.
- If the client has insurance or payment issues, refer to the [***Client Concerns for People Living with HIV \(PLWH\): Checklist.***](#)

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- Offer to help the client fill out any intake forms.

Getting to the Appointment



ASK client:

- Do you have transportation to get to the appointments?
 - **If NO**, offer any bus/transportation service or bus/train passes available from your agency. Go over public transportation options and offer to accompany client to the appointment.
 - **If YES**, meet client at the provider's office or follow-up with them after the appointment (if not accompanying client) to confirm that they kept their appointment.
- Do you have children? If so, who will take care of them while you attend your appointment?



INFORM client:

- Inform the client of any transportation services provided by your organization or another agency in the area.
- Inform client of any childcare services your agency provides or help them identify affordable/free childcare services.



To DO:

- Arrange transportation and/or childcare for the client.
- Give the client a copy of the medical appointment referral, which includes: agency name and address, appointment date, time, phone, and contact person. **Make sure the word HIV does not appear anywhere on the referral form. A sample [Medical Appointments Referral Form](#) can be accessed here.**
- Provide client with a list of local transportation and/or childcare resources.