

Client Handbook



2015

Revised 11/3/15

Our Mission

To improve the lives of Central Texans living with, at risk for, and affected by HIV, AIDS and Hepatitis C through outreach, education, health and holistic services, and care coordination.

Our Vision

Everyone in our community affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C will experience an improved quality of life.

8101 Cameron Rd., Ste. 105
Austin, Texas 78754
www.thewrighthouse.org

Hours

Monday - Thursday, 8:30 am - 5:30 pm
(late hours by appointment)
Friday, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm

Contact

Ph. 512-467-0088
Fx. 512-467-0829
info@thewrighthouse.org

The Wright House Wellness Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization providing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Disease Management and Disease Prevention programs to people living in the Austin Transitional Grant Area (TGA) - Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties.

Services are provided at either no- or low-cost and eligibility is determined by service. No one is refused services due to inability to pay.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why does WHWC have specific programs for African Americans and Latinos?

According to the Texas State Data Center & Office of the State Demographer, in 2006-2007, *African Americans* accounted for only 7.8% of the Austin TGA's population (Travis, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Williamson Counties), but 27% of new cases of AIDS and 20.1% of new HIV cases.

According to the CDC, *Latinos* are also disproportionately affected by HIV, representing approximately 16 percent of the total U.S. population, but accounting for 20 percent of all new HIV infections. In 2009, the HIV infection rate among Latinos was three times as high as that of whites.

Many Federal, State and local funders have awarded specific funding to work with the African American and Latino populations due to this disproportionate impact.

Are you a program of any other HIV/AIDS organization?

No, WHWC is not a program of any other organization. We do collaborate and partner on different programs and projects throughout the year and work closely with one another to make sure clients receive the best services possible.

Where does your funding come from?

The Wright House Wellness Center receives funding from the following sources:

- City of Austin
- Travis County
- Ryan White Part A and MAI
- Foundations
- Philanthropy groups
- Individual donors
- Corporations

Why do I have to fill out so much paperwork?

WHWC is required to submit reports to our funders so they know their money is being spent in the way it is intended. The types of information we submit includes:

- Numbers of clients receiving services
- Numbers of services provided to clients
- Information that shows clients have achieved a specific goal or goal.

No identifying information is ever released in the reports we submit.

Programs (cont.)

HIV Support Group @ WHWC

Free support group for HIV+ clients to address personal, medical, health and relationship issues. Facilitated by Karen Breeding, LPC.

Eligibility: HIV+.

Complementary (Holistic) Health Therapies

Complementary Health Therapies help in the relief of side effects and symptoms of medications and chronic illness, increase energy, decrease the effects of stress, provide social and emotional support, and give individuals a sense of well-being and balance. The Complementary Health Therapies program is designed to:

- assist you with adherence to your medical treatments
- assist you with staying in primary medical care services
- assist with increasing or maintaining your quality of life

WHWC contracts with area practitioners for reduced or no-cost services and acts as a referral agency to practitioners and services. Sliding scale fee for services. Services provided may include:

- *Massage Therapy* - Manual soft tissue manipulation, includes holding, causing movement, and/or applying pressure to the body with the intention of positively affecting the health and well-being of the client.
- *Acupuncture* - The insertion of needles into particular parts of the body to relieve stress and pain. Helps improve overall energy, and decrease the discomfort due to side effects of antiviral medications.

Eligibility: Any WHWC client (HIV- and/or HCV-positive); Travis, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays and Williamson Counties.

Community Hepatitis C Support Group

For people living with Hepatitis C & their family or friends for education, advocacy and emotional support.

Contact Larry Cuellar at (512) 406-6447 for more information.

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Notice of Privacy Practices (NPP)

Effective 04/13/2003

This notice describes how Medical information about you may be used and disclosed and how you may get access to this information.

The Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal program that requires all Protected Health Information (PHI) and other individually identifiable health information used or disclosed by The Wright House Wellness Center (WHWC) in any form whether electronically, on paper, or orally, are kept private and confidential. This Act gives you, the client, significant new rights to understand and control how your PHI is used. HIPAA provides penalties for covered entities that misuse PHI.

As required by HIPAA, The Wright House Wellness Center has prepared this explanation of how we are required to maintain the privacy of your PHI and how we may use and disclose your PHI. This NPP extends to all contracted practitioners and employees of WHWC.

OUR DUTIES.

The Wright House Wellness Center shall:

- Make every effort to maintain the privacy of your health information;
- Provide you with notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to information we collect and maintain about you;
- Abide by the terms of this notice;
- Notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction; and
- Accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate health information by alternative means or at alternative locations.

THE METHODS IN WHICH WHWC MAY USE AND DISCLOSE MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

The Wright House Wellness Center may use and disclose your medical records only for each of the following purposes:

Treatment. To provide, coordinate, or manage your health care and related services. For example, we may share your PHI with contracted practitioners/employees for the purposes of treatment or within the agency between programs you are enrolled in.

Payment. Activities such as obtaining reimbursement for services, billing or collection activities, and utilization review. For example, practitioners may submit treatment records to WHWC each month as documentation for services rendered to clients.

For Health Care Operations. Your PHI may be used and disclosed as part of office operations. For example, files may be audited for timely documentation. In addition, your PHI may be used in the evaluation of health care services, and the appropriateness and quality of health care treatment.

Appointment Reminders. We may use and disclose your PHI in order to remind you of an appointment.

HIV Transportation Services

The HIV Transportation Services Program provides transportation to eligible clients to core medical and support services. Assistance is provided through public transit, or in special cases, gas vouchers or taxicab rides. The program goal is to reduce barriers to accessing, maintaining, and adhering to primary health care and related social support services. Core Medical Services include:

- Medical
- Mental Health and Substance Abuse
- Dental
- Medical Case Management
- Pharmacies
- Home Health

Support Services include:

- Other social service agencies
- Non-medical Case Management
- Obtainment of food and other household/personal necessities

Eligibility: HIV+, living in Travis, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays or Williamson Counties, demonstrated transportation need.

Housing Assistance - Community Resources

Services are based on ability to meet eligibility requirements, availability of funding and severity of need and are not guaranteed.

HOPWA

Housing Assistance may be provided to eligible clients through the Housing for Persons Living with HIV Program (HOPWA). Assistance may be short or long-term and may include:

- Rental/Mortgage Assistance
- Utility Assistance

Eligibility: HIV+, demonstrated housing need, living in Travis, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays or Williamson Counties, living at 30% or below the Austin Area Median income, and receiving Case Management services.

These criteria are subject to change.

HIV Case Management

Client intake and assessment; information and referral; assistance accessing community resources; social support provided by professional case managers and/or supervised interns. Goals of the WHWC Case Management program are to assist clients to:

- Access and maintain primary medical care
- Adhere to HIV medical treatment
- Maintain/Increase quality of life
- Increase education and awareness of HIV/AIDS issues
- Identify and decrease barriers to services
- Increase continuity of care and coordination of services
- Increase self-sufficiency, ultimately to the point where case management services are no longer needed

Eligibility: HIV+, not currently enrolled in any other HIV Case Management program, and living in the Austin TGA - Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, or Williamson Counties.

Housing Case Management (Best Single Source+)

Client intake and assessment; information and referral; assistance accessing community resources; social support provided by professional case managers and/or supervised interns. Goals of the WHWC Housing Case Management program are to assist clients to:

- Obtain and maintain stable housing
- Maintain/Increase quality of life
- Identify and decrease barriers to services
- Increase continuity of care and coordination of services
- Increase self-sufficiency, ultimately to the point where case management services are no longer needed

Assistance is for short-term emergency situations and may include:

- Rental Assistance
- Utility Assistance

Eligibility: HIV+ or HCV+ case managed client with a demonstrated short-term housing need (3 months), Travis County resident, determined by Case Manager.

Funding Requirements. We may use and disclose your PHI, without identifying information (ex. birth date, name, social security number, phone number, etc.), for the purposes of reporting service usage and service efficacy to funders.

Referrals. We may use and disclose your PHI when making or receiving referrals for you to/from community resources.

Research. Under certain circumstances, we may use and disclose your PHI, without identifying information (ex. birth date, name, social security number, phone number, etc.), for research purposes.

As Required by Law. We will disclose your PHI when required to do so by federal or Texas laws or regulations.

To Avert a Serious Threat to Health or Safety. We may use and disclose your PHI to medical or law enforcement personnel when necessary to prevent a serious threat to your health and safety or the health and safety of another person.

De-identified PHI. WHWC may also create and distribute de-identified health information by removing all references to individually identifiable information.

Any other uses and disclosures will be made only with your written authorization. You may revoke such authorization in writing and WHWC is required to honor and abide by that written request, except to the extent that we have already taken actions relying on your authorization.

YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU.

You have the following rights regarding your PHI:

Right to Inspect and Copy. You have the right to inspect medical information that may be used to make decisions about your care. This includes, medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes. Your written authorization is required to receive a copy of your psychotherapy notes.

Right to Amend. You have the right to request an amendment be made to your PHI if you feel medical information maintained about you is incorrect or incomplete.

Right to an Accounting of Disclosures. This is a list of the disclosures made of your medical information for purposes other than treatment, payment, or health care operations. You have a right to request a copy of this list.

Right to Request Restrictions. You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on certain uses and disclosures of your PHI including those related to disclosures to family members, other relatives, close personal friends, or any other person identifies by you. **WHWC is not required to agree to your request.**

Right to Request Confidential Information. You have the right to request that WHWC communicate with you about health matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that WHWC contact you only at home or by mail.

All requests must be made in writing to:

Executive Director/WHWC
4301-B North IH-35
Austin, Texas, 78722
(512) 467-0088

Your request must state a reason or reasons for the request.

CHANGES TO THIS NOTICE.

WHWC reserves the right to change our practices and make new provisions effective for all PHI we maintain. Should our information practices change, WHWC will post the amended Notices of Privacy Practices in our offices and on our website. You may request that a copy be provided to you by contacting:

Executive Director
512-467-0088
info@thewrighthouse.org

COMPLAINTS.

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with WHWC or with the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Your complaint must be filed within 180 days of when you knew or should have known that the act occurred. All complaints should be submitted in writing.

The Wright House Wellness Center
4301-B North IH-35
Austin, TX 78722

Region VI, Office for Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
1301 Young Street, Suite 1169
Dallas, TX 75202

YOU WILL NOT BE PENALIZED FOR FILING A COMPLAINT.

ID Card The client ID card holds your WHWC Client Number and also allows you to access Acupuncture/Massage Services at a reduced rate. The ID card will have the following information on it:

- Your first name and last initial
- Your WHWC client number
- Acupuncture/Massage Fee
- Card Expiration Date (valid for 6 months)

Once your card expires, you must request a new card. In order to receive your new card, Staff will ask you to complete a “recertification” and provide the following:

- Client Follow-Up Form
- ARIES (HIV) database sharing consent form (if HIV+ and expired)
- Release of Confidential Medical Information (if expired)
- Proof of Income every year

Accessing Complementary Health Therapies Fees for Acupuncture and Massage are based on a sliding fee scale determined by your income. The sliding fee scale follows the 2015 U.S. Health and Human Services Federal Poverty Guidelines starting at 200% of the poverty level. \$11,770 =100%.

<u>Income</u>	<u>Service Fee</u>
* \$0 – \$23,540	\$ 3.00
* \$23,541– \$28,541	\$ 5.00
* \$28,542 – \$33,542	\$10.00
* \$33,543 – \$38,543	\$15.00
* \$38,544 – \$43,544	\$20.00
* \$43,545 – \$48,545	\$25.00
* \$48,546 – \$53,546	\$30.00
* \$53,547 – and above	\$35.00

Please pay your fee to the practitioner at the time you receive the service. No one is denied services based on an inability to pay.

Practitioner List The WHWC practitioner list contains information about all current practitioners and services. Clients are responsible for contacting practitioners, scheduling appointments and paying the practitioner fee at the time of service. Practitioners work out of their own offices or at the WHWC office.

Missed Appointment/Cancellation Policy Please contact the practitioner you have scheduled with to cancel or reschedule your appointment. If you are unable to contact your practitioner, it is your responsibility to have someone call for you.

Disease Management Program

For more information, please contact 512-467-0088 or info@thewrightshouse.org.

General Services Information

Request for Service (Screening)

All individuals seeking services for the first time from WHWC, will be assessed for basic program eligibility through the completion of a Request for Service (Screening) form to ensure need(s) is (are) met in the most accurate and efficient manner.

Eligibility and Documentation

Initial Intake Anyone wishing to receive services under the Disease Management Program is required to complete an initial intake which will include at minimum:

- Intake Paperwork
- Assessment
- Service plan
- Documentation of HIV and/or HCV status

Disease Status Federal requirements mandate that each client must have documentation of disease status on file at our office, updated every six months. WHWC will obtain a signed Authorization to Release or Exchange Confidential Information form from you in order to contact your doctor directly.

Proof of Income All clients must show proof of income at the initial intake and on a yearly basis thereafter. Acceptable forms of documentation include:

- Paycheck stub
- SSI award letter
- Bank statement
- Signed statement of "No Income"

Documentation of income will determine program eligibility and any fees for services.

Confidentiality

A person's health status is confidential information and is protected by state and federal laws. WHWC also has specific and clear personnel policies to protect these rights. Many clients choose not to be public about their diagnosis. This is a personal decision and has no bearing on eligibility for services from WHWC. Client information may be shared within the agency to ensure continuity of care.

All clients, volunteers and employees of WHWC sign a statement of confidentiality. There are a few exceptions to confidentiality that are required by law and professional standards. The exceptions include:

- Threats of harm to yourself
- Threats of harm to others
- Abuse to children, the elderly, or disabled

These exceptions are discussed by WHWC staff as needed. As professionals, we are required by law to inform the authorities (i.e. Austin Police Department, Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, etc.) of any such risks of harm.

Any person who breaches confidentiality may be discharged from The Wright House Wellness Center.

Grievance Policy

- Clients may initiate the grievance procedure at any time for a complaint.
- Clients may complain directly to any staff member who will then forward the complaint to the program coordinator. Client may also submit complaint directly to the program coordinator.

4301-B North IH-35
Austin, Texas 78722
Phone 512-467-0088
Fax 512-467-0829

- The client may also submit the complaint directly to the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department - HIV Resources Administration Unit.
 - If the client chooses to pursue the complaint within the agency the client may submit the complaint in writing and shall be assisted with writing the complaint if they are unable to write.
 - Clients shall be provided with pens, paper, envelopes, postage and access to a telephone in order to file a complaint.
 - The client may follow the steps below in seeking satisfaction to his/her complaint.
- A. Any person alleging a grievance must file a complaint in writing to the specific program coordinator of the staff person involved in the complaint. The grievance must be signed and dated by the complainant and include the following:
1. Name, address and phone number of the person filing the complaint.
 2. Date and description of the action or failure to act that is the subject of the complaint.
 3. Name of person or person(s) believed to be responsible for the action that is the subject of the complaint.
 4. Description of corrective action sought by complainant.
- B. Within ten (10) days of receiving the complaint, the program coordinator will schedule a conference to resolve the complaint. Prior to the day of the conference, program coordinator should obtain as much information as possible from the complainant, other parties, and staff.

Conference can entail receiving additional information from all scheduled parties (for complainant as well as staff).

Within five (5) business days after the conference, the program coordinator will issue a conclusion of fact and a recommendation for resolving complaint.

Disease Prevention Program

For more information, please contact 512-467-0088 or info@thewrightshouse.org.

HIV Testing, Linkage to Care and Navigation of Support Services

HIV testing is critical because research shows that when people learn they are infected, they take steps to protect their own health and prevent HIV transmission to others.

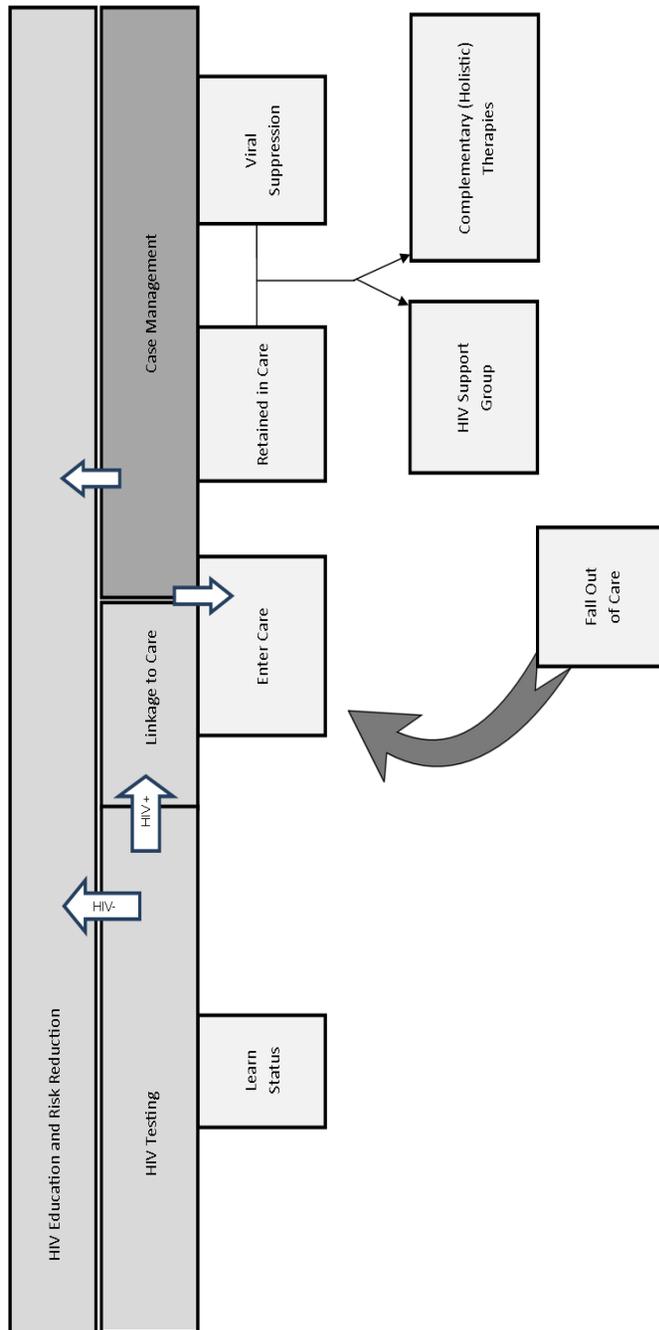
Linkage to care helps ensure people living with HIV receive life-saving medical care and treatment, and helps reduce their risk of transmitting HIV.

Navigation Support Services provides, links, and/or refers clients to essential social support services, such as:

- Partners Services
- Medication adherence
- Integrated screening and treatment for STDs, Hepatitis, and TB
- Other area HIV prevention and care programs
- Substance abuse treatment programs
- Mental health counseling and services
- Case management
- Housing
- Transportation services
- Basic education continuation/completion services
- Employment readiness and referral programs, as appropriate

Eligibility: Latino Men who have Sex with Men and high risk African American Women; ages 13-55; Travis, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays and Williamson Counties.

WHWC's Continuum of Care



If complainant is not satisfied with recommendation, he/she may appeal to the Executive Director of The Wright House Wellness Center.

- C. Within ten (10) days of receiving an appeal, the Executive Director shall schedule a meeting with the complainant and the program coordinator to review the recommendation.

Within five (5) business days after the meeting, the Executive Director shall issue an opinion regarding the recommendation of the program coordinator or other terms of resolution of the complaint as he/she determines.

- D. If the complainant is still not satisfied, he/she may pursue the complaint with the appropriate Administrative Agent as listed below:

Program	WHWC Contact	Funding Source	Administrative Agency	Contact Info
HIV Case Management	Leah Graham	Ryan White Part A	Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department, HIV Resources Administration Unit	Greg Bolds 512-972-5083
HIV Case Management	Leah Graham	Travis County	Travis County Health & Human Services and Veteran Services	N/A
Best Single Source Plus	Leah Graham	City of Austin, Travis County	Caritas of Austin	512-479-4610
HOPWA	Leah Graham	HUD	AIDS Services of Austin	Sandra Chavez 512-458-2437
Medical Transportation (Bus Passes, MetroAccess Tickets, Cab Vouchers)	Leah Graham	Ryan White Part A	Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department, HIV Resources Administration Unit	Greg Bolds 512-972-5083
Holistic Services (Acupuncture, Massage)	Leah Graham	City of Austin	Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department, HIV Resources Administration Unit	Greg Bolds 512-972-5083
HIV Testing and Linkage to Care	Leah Graham	City of Austin	Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department, HIV Resources Administration Unit	Greg Bolds 512-972-5083

Client Rights

As a client of WHWC, you have certain basic rights.

- The right to receive considerate, dignified, and respectful care and treatment, regardless of your physical health or emotional condition, by all WHWC employees and volunteers.
- The right to be informed of what services the agency provides, the methods for obtaining these services, and the reasons a service is not being provided.
- The right to a response from WHWC in a reasonable manner to your request(s) for services provided by the agency.
- The right to refuse to participate in any of the programs provided by WHWC or to terminate your participation without recrimination.
- The right to expect that the agency will maintain the confidentiality about the services you receive(d), except as otherwise provided by law. Through a release form, you decide with whom WHWC can share information.
- The right to privacy, which means WHWC staff and appropriate volunteers will only discuss your case as needed to provide services to you.
- The right to language assistance services, including bilingual staff and interpreter services, at no cost to you.
- The right to competent interpreters and bilingual staff.
- The right to easily understood materials.

Client Service Information

Programs and Services

Preventing new HCV infections saves money and saves lives.

For information on hepatitis testing in your area, please call 211.

Hepatitis C Virus FAST FACTS

- Chronic hepatitis C is the leading cause of chronic liver disease and liver transplants in the United States.
- Even with a liver transplant, HCV can reoccur and damage the new liver.
- Liver disease from HCV is now the leading non-AIDS cause of death in the U.S. in people with HIV.
- There is no vaccine for HCV.
- People affected by HCV are encouraged to contact the Texas Liver Coalition at (800) 72-LIVER or www.texasliver.org.

DSHS TB/HIV/STD Unit
PO Box 149347 MC 1873
Austin, Texas 78714-9347
(512) 533-3000
www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd

Publication No. E13-13113 (Rev. 5/09)

<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/hivstd/info/edmat/HCVinTexas.pdf>

Client Code of Conduct

There are two categories of conduct that are inappropriate for clients and that will result in the termination or suspension of services.

The **serious category** includes: verbal assaults on volunteers, practitioners, other clients, or staff; repeatedly being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs on WHWC, practitioner or WHWC event premises.

The **intolerable category** includes: theft or vandalism at WHWC or practitioner offices; repeated verbal assaults on volunteers, practitioners, other clients, or staff; threats towards or physical attacks on volunteers, practitioners, other clients, or staff; dealing or soliciting illegal drugs or sexual activity on WHWC, practitioner or WHWC events premises; intentionally deceiving WHWC staff regarding need and/or eligibility for services; violation of client confidentiality, and unauthorized access to confidential client information.

When a client commits an act in the “serious” category:

1. The agency will fill out an incident report and submit it to the Executive Director.

2. If the problem can not be resolved, the client’s services will be suspended for thirty days and the case will be reviewed by the Board of Directors where a decision will be made.

When a client commits an act in the “intolerable” category:

1. Services to the client are immediately suspended, and the client may be barred from WHWC premises.

2. WHWC Board of Directors will review the case and decide whether to end the suspension or to terminate services entirely.

HIV Client Consent for ARIES Data Sharing Among Your Service Providers

(1) What is ARIES? “ARIES”, which stands for AIDS Regional Information and Evaluation System, is a web-based data management program used by your local HIV providers and agencies in collaboration with the Austin Travis County Health and Human Services Department (“ATCHHSD”) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (“TDSHS”). ARIES replaces two older databases that could no longer keep up with demand. ARIES is a confidential database that keeps track of certain personal information about you. This Personal Information includes: (1) information on how to get in touch with you; (2) demographic information such as your age, race and sex/gender; (3) certain medical information such as lab results, and medications; and (4) information about other HIV related services that you receive and may include notes regarding your case management, mental health and substance abuse counseling. (Throughout the remainder of this document, this information shall be referred to as “Personal Information”). ARIES allows the government agencies that fund HIV programs and services to evaluate the quality and delivery of those services. (Throughout the remainder of this document, these government agencies, ATCHHSD and DSHS, shall be referred to as “Funding and Evaluating Agencies”). By law, Funding and Evaluating Agencies have access to your Personal Information regardless of your wishes as set forth at the end of this form. The law also requires Funding and Evaluating Agencies to protect your Personal Information.

(2) How can ARIES Help me? The ARIES database also serves an even more important purpose: with your consent, ARIES allows your HIV service providers to share your Personal Information with each other, thereby saving you time and paperwork. HIV/AIDS support and services are provided by a group of agencies that deliver a range of services including: medical and dental care, case management, food bank and transportation services, to name a few. (Throughout the remainder of this document, the groups that provide these services will be referred to as “HIV Service Providers”). With your consent, ARIES allows these Service Providers to coordinate their services for you. The purpose of this document is to provide you with information so that you can decide whether or not to allow your HIV Service Providers to share your Personal Information as necessary to provide you services.

(3) Your Personal Information: How is it protected? ARIES uses extensive security measures to protect your Personal Information. These measures were developed in consultation with consumers like yourself. The staff members who work for your HIV Service Providers must be granted permission by the Funding and Evaluating Agencies to access your Personal Information. Your Personal Information is only

HCV (cont.)

HCV Risk and Prevention

HCV is prevented by avoiding contact with infected blood. Those at high risk for coming into contact with infected blood include current and former injecting drug users (IDU), recipients of blood products and organ transplants prior to 1992, health care and public safety workers, and infants born to infected mothers. Although HCV is not easily spread through sex, people with more than 50 lifetime sex partners and people having sex with an HCV-infected steady partner are also at risk. There is no vaccine for HCV. Prevention relies on education, risk assessment, testing and treatment referral. People at risk for

HCV may benefit by participation in prevention activities designed to reduce health risks associated with injection drug use. Because HIV and HCV are transmitted through infected blood, prevention activities work well for both diseases. Since the introduction of HIV prevention activities, transmission of HCV has gone down among young IDUs.

HCV Treatment

Current treatment for HCV is lengthy, costly and produces limited results. About half of patients who receive treatment permanently clear the virus from their bodies. Treatment success depends on many factors, including the type of HCV, virus levels, stage of disease and ability to tolerate therapy. Diet, exercise, not drinking alcohol or using unnecessary drugs, getting enough sleep and other healthy living choices can all enhance the quality of life for someone with HCV. People with HCV may also find counseling and support groups helpful in deciding treatment options, learning to prevent transmission, and assistance in making healthy living changes.

Cost of HCV

The cost of HCV is great. A 2005 study of hospital admissions in Texas found HCV to be the most costly of all hepatitis-related admissions. HCV admissions totaled just below \$39 million, more than all other hepatitis types combined. Hepatitis related chronic liver disease resulted in more than \$150 million in hospital costs. HCV costs will continue to rise. While the number of new HCV infections is expected to decline, the number of infections that progress to cirrhosis is expected to increase.

Fighting HCV in Texas

More HCV resources, including prevention, testing and treatment, are needed to prevent the further spread of the disease. Early detection allows people more choices in treatment and care. Prevention stops new infections. Treatment improves quality of life.

Hepatitis C in Texas
Texas Department of State Health Services TB/HIV/STD Unit
May 2009

ARIES (cont.)

The Big Picture.

Infection with hepatitis C Virus (HCV) is the most common blood-borne disease in the United States. Studies estimate that 1.8% of Texans are infected with HCV. There are approximately 368,000 cases of hepatitis C, 80 percent of which (about 300,000) are chronic (long-lasting) infections.

In Texas, estimates also indicate that there may be a greater disease burden among Black (2.82%), and Hispanic (2.00%) people. Other racial and ethnic groups (1.79) carry the third highest rates and White people have the lowest estimated infection rate (1.38%). Although most cases of infection occur in and around large urban areas, a disproportionate amount of the disease happens along the Texas/Mexico border.

How is HCV spread?

HCV is spread through contact with infected blood. HCV can be spread by sharing needles, razors, and tattoo/body piercing tools. It can also be spread through accidental exposure to infected blood. HCV is spread from infected mothers to newborns in rare instances. HCV is not easily spread through sex. Without medical intervention, about 15 to 25 percent of people will clear the virus from their bodies. Of the other 75 to 85 percent, a large percentage will develop chronic liver disease (60 -70%) and/or cirrhosis (15-20%). A small percentage (1-5%) will die from liver cancer or cirrhosis. Some people may not have symptoms for many years after infection. Some people never have symptoms.

HIV Co-Infection

About one in four HIV-infected people in the United States are also infected with HCV. Among injection drug users, the co-infection rate is estimated to be even higher (50%-90%). HCV infection may also affect the development and treatment of HIV infection. Some research suggests that certain types of HCV lead to a more rapid progression of HIV.

The effects of HIV on HCV are better understood. Studies show that people who have HIV and HCV have higher levels of HCV in the blood, more rapid progression to HCV-related liver disease, and increased risk for cirrhosis and liver cancer. Liver failure is a leading cause of hospitalization for people with HIV. Because people with HIV are living longer due to HIV treatment advances, HCV complications have more time to develop.

accessible by authorized staff persons who may only see the portion of your Personal Information that they need to serve you.

(4) Here's what you need to know about sharing your information: If you agree that your HIV Service Providers may share your Personal Information, you save time. For instance, you will complete intake and eligibility enrollment procedures only once each year. Additionally, service referrals are simplified by allowing authorized staff, including your case managers, to schedule appointments and follow-up on referrals. Certain Personal Information will not be shared among your HIV Service Providers including counseling notes concerning mental health and substance abuse as well as notes concerning legal services.

(5) Here's what you need to know about not sharing your information: You have the right to refuse the sharing of your Personal Information among your HIV Service Providers. Your HIV Service Providers will not deny you services based on your decision not to share your Personal Information. Regardless of your choice today, Funding and Evaluation Agencies will have access to your Personal Information.

(6) Revoking your consent to share information among Service Providers: Once you give your consent to allow HIV Service Providers to share your Personal Information, you may revoke that consent at any time by requesting a revocation form from your HIV Service Provider, signing that form, and returning it to your Provider. From the date you that revoke your consent onward, your HIV Service Providers may no longer share your Personal Information with each other. However, any Personal Information entered prior to the date of your revocation will continue to be accessible to any of your HIV Service Providers whom you have previously authorized to share your information.

(7) Want more information? Have a problem or complaint? For more information, please ask your HIV Service Provider or call 512-972-5062. If you have a complaint, every HIV Service Provider has a standard grievance policy. You have the right to file a grievance and your grievance cannot be used against you. If you ask for the grievance policy and cannot get it, call 512-972-5062 and ask for the Quality Management Coordinator.

(8) Please read below and indicate your preference: My signature below indicates the following: I understand that my Personal Information, including, but not limited to, my HIV status are recorded in a protected centralized database called ARIES.

ARIES (cont.)

By marking the box below, I indicate my choice to either allow my HIV Service Providers to share my Personal Information **or** to not allow my HIV Service Providers to share my Personal Information.

If I allow my HIV Service Providers to share my Personal Information, authorized staff at these agencies where I go for services may share my Personal Information, subject to the restrictions noted in paragraphs 1-6 above:

- Jack Sansing Dental Clinic
- The Care Communities
- David Powell Community Health Center
- Project Transitions
- Community Action Inc. – Rural AIDS Service Program
- AIDS Services of Austin
- The Wright House Wellness Center
- City of Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Department (Administrative Agency for Ryan White Title I & III and HOPWA).
- City of Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services Communicable Disease Unit
- Austin/Travis County Mental Health and Mental Retardation C.A.R.E. program
- ALLGO

I also understand that other HIV Service Providers may be available to me in the future, and if I choose to access these new HIV Service Providers, my Personal Information may be shared with them without further authorization from me.

I understand that if I choose to allow my HIV Service Providers to share my Personal Information, I may revoke my authorization at any time as described in paragraph 6. I understand that regardless of my choice today, Funding and Evaluation Agencies will have access to my Personal Information.

HIV & AIDS (cont.)

Why should you take the test?

If you are infected with HIV, there are things you can do to stay healthy longer. Research shows that early treatment can help delay the onset of AIDS. You can also take steps to avoid infecting other people with HIV. If you are pregnant and infected with HIV, there are medicines you can take to reduce your baby's risk of getting HIV.

Call 972-5580 for information about where to get tested in and around Austin.

HIV & AIDS (cont.)

- A few babies have been infected by breastfeeding from their infected mother.
- Although all donated blood has been screened for HIV since 1985, some people got the virus by receiving HIV-infected blood products between 1978 and 1985. You cannot get HIV by giving blood.

How you WON'T get infected.

You cannot get HIV through the air or from casual contact. HIV is not spread by:

- Living, working or going to school with someone with HIV infection
- Shaking hands, hugging, or kissing
- Sneezing or coughing
- Sharing food, plates, cups or forks
- Toilets, tubs, or swimming pools
- Mosquitoes or other insects

How can you avoid HIV infection?

- Don't have sex. This is the only sure way to avoid getting HIV through sex.
- Don't share needles and syringes to shoot drugs or for anything else.
- Use a latex condom every time you have sex unless you are sure your partner is not infected. When used correctly, condoms can help prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Stay with one partner who has sex only with you. Use condoms unless you are sure your partner is not infected with HIV.

Should you get an HIV test?

You should think about getting tested for HIV if you have:

- Had sex without a condom (anal, vaginal or oral) with someone whose HIV status you do not know – even if that person is your boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse
- Shared needles, syringes or works
- Had multiple sex partners, male or female (the more partners you have, the greater your risk)
- Been diagnosed with – or treated for – hepatitis, tuberculosis or any sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- Exchanged sex for money, drugs or other goods
- Received blood products between 1978 and 1985
- Had sex – even once – with anyone who has done any of these things

HIV and AIDS

Texas Department of State Health Services TB/HIV/STD Unit
November 2009

Get the facts about HIV & AIDS:

- HIV is the virus that causes AIDS, a disease that destroys the body's ability to fight off infections.
- There is no cure for HIV or AIDS.
- AIDS can be fatal.
- People become infected with HIV because of what they do, not who they are.
- There are only a few ways you can become infected with HIV.
- You can protect yourself from becoming infected with HIV.
- You can protect yourself from becoming infected with HIV.
- An HIV test can show if you have been infected. The test is confidential.
- If you are infected with HIV, there are things you can do to stay healthy.

What are HIV and AIDS?

HIV (or Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). HIV damages the immune system, the part of the body that fights infection. Eventually, the immune system becomes so weak that diseases and infections begin to attack the body. As these conditions worsen, a person is diagnosed with AIDS.

How can you tell if someone is infected with HIV?

You cannot tell if someone has HIV or AIDS by looking at them. A person infected with HIV may look healthy and feel fine, but they can still pass the virus to you. An HIV antibody test is the way a person can find out if he or she is infected with HIV.

Anyone can become infected with HIV. It has nothing to do with race, age, religion, nationality or sexual orientation. People get infected with HIV because of what they do, not who they are.

How do you get infected with HIV?

HIV is spread through blood, semen, vaginal secretions and breast milk. Contact with these body fluids puts you at risk for HIV infection.

- Having sex (anal, vaginal or oral), with someone who is infected with HIV.
- Sharing needles or syringes with someone who is infected. This includes sharing needles to shoot drugs or vitamins, to pierce body parts, or for tattoos.
- A woman with HIV can pass the virus to her baby during pregnancy or birth.