

Funded Categories

Category 1: PrEP (Preexposure Prophylaxis)

Background

The Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News Metropolitan Statistical Area (VBN-MSA) has a disproportionate burden of HIV relative to its population density. While housing just 20.5% of the Virginia population, the VBN-MSA is home to 31% of the Commonwealth's persons living HIV, and 33% of persons living with HIV are considered lost-to-care. Across the Continuum of Care, People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the VBN-MSA experience the worst HIV-related health outcomes of any region in the state. The VBN-MSA also has the highest rate of HIV incidence in the state. There is a further disparity among African American/black persons in this MSA, who make up 64% of all PLWHA and 60% of all persons lost to care.

Overview of Virginia's Project PrIDE Plan

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Division of Disease Prevention (DDP) will implement a multi-pronged demonstration project designed to reduce the incidence of HIV in the VBN-MSA through structural interventions which increase the awareness of, access to and uptake of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for those at high risk of contracting HIV. The initiative will be a collaborative effort between the state and local health departments (LHDs), community-based organizations (CBOs), community partners (including health care providers), men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender (TG) persons, and other persons at increased risk of acquiring HIV, particularly persons of color.

Programmatic Activities

DDP has designed activities that directly impact the specific challenges associated with implementing a PrEP intervention in the VBN-MSA, such as the dearth of PrEP providers in the area and the lack of accurate information about PrEP among the target population. Activities that will be implemented include: clinician training, marketing the availability and benefits of PrEP through social media using feedback from a community engagement process, collaboration with medical and non-medical providers to increase the number of sites equipped to provide education about the use of PrEP for high-risk HIV-negative individuals, and the development of policies guiding improved access to PrEP.

This project is aligned with national HIV prevention goals and the CDC's High-Impact Prevention approach to (1) reduce new HIV infections among persons at high risk for acquiring HIV, (2) increase access to HIV care, (3) optimize health outcomes, and (4) reduce HIV-related health disparities in the VBN-MSA.

- 1) **Clinician Training**--DDP intends to increase the number of providers who prescribe PrEP and maintain PrEP treatment regimens with their patients by engaging providers in various educational opportunities and outreach efforts, including distribution of informational materials, provider toolkits, one-on-one conversations, and dissemination of relevant contact information and resources.

- 2) ***Marketing the availability and benefits of PrEP through social media using feedback from the community engagement process***--Social Media and Marketing activities are key elements to increasing the number of MSM and TG individuals who are prescribed PrEP, specifically by increasing the number of MSM and TG individuals who request this biomedical prevention tool. DDP will begin with formative research on the behaviors, attitudes, and media outlets being used by MSM of color and TG individuals in the VBN-MSA. Based on the results of their formative work VDH will develop a social marketing campaign that will include a variety of media outlets. DDP will also use existing relevant campaign materials such as those created by CDC, Kaiser Family Foundation and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) and tailor them for Virginia.
- 3) ***Collaborate with non-medical CBOs and indigent care providers to increase the number of sites equipped to provide education about the use of PrEP for high-risk HIV-negative individuals***--With the support of advisory groups and CBOs, DDP seeks to expand, improve, and enhance prevention services for MSM, TG individuals, and other individuals at high risk of acquiring HIV, particularly persons of color, by creating an innovative and culturally competent demonstration project to provide targeted PrEP education, PrEP related services, HIV risk reduction education, and assessments for referrals to PrEP services.
- 4) ***Community engagement and collaboration with health districts to increase the number of sites equipped to provide education about the use of PrEP***--DDP will collaborate with health districts within the VBN-MSA to identify ways to work together to provide PrEP services for MSM and TG individuals, particularly those of color, and other persons at high risk for acquiring HIV. Activities will include incorporating PrEP information/education and screening into the routine clinic flow of the most appropriate clinics. To ensure culturally appropriate delivery of information and services, DDP will gain input from local advisory boards and the target population and provide relevant staff training on how to serve and work effectively with the community.
- 5) ***Develop policies guiding improved access to PrEP that will include how to utilize 3rd party reimbursements, Medicaid, patient assistance programs, and eligibility criteria for direct provision of PrEP***--Through the development and assessment of a PrEP Pilot, and the subsequent refinement of state-level policies and protocols, DDP will increase buy-in and accountability of providers to implement a PrEP intervention, as well as the skills necessary to do so effectively. DDP will also develop various informational materials and referral tools to enhance delivery of PrEP and PrEP-related services which will include information on how to utilize 3rd party reimbursement, Medicaid, patient assistance programs, and eligibility criteria for direct provision of PrEP.

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