

HIV Names-based Reporting in California Frequently Asked Questions



- 1) What is HIV Names-based reporting all about?
 - A) Many types of illnesses that pose a threat of being transmitted from one person to another are required to be reported to the local health officer. HIV is one of these illnesses. As of April 17, 2006 in California the reporting requirements changed to require that cases of HIV be reported using the name of the person, rather than an alphanumeric code.
- 2) Why did California change from a code-based system to a names-based system?
 - A) There were many reasons for this change, including a system that is more compatible with health care and treatment of other illnesses in California. A very significant reason is that federal and state funding for the care and treatment of HIV/AIDS patients must be based upon a names-based system of reporting. If California did not change its system, the state may have lost up to \$50 million annually in federal funding.
- 3) Why does my information have to be reported to the health officer?
 - A) Health officers are responsible for the public health of their jurisdiction: in this instance, Santa Barbara County. They are required to collect information on cases of communicable diseases and report this information to the State Public Health Department which in turn reports to the Centers for Disease Control. This information is used to effectively control the spread of disease and to protect the public's health.
- 4) How is information on HIV collected and reported?
 - A) Confirmed HIV test results, either Western blot, immunofluorescence antibody tests or HIV diagnostic testing such as Viral Load, T-cell counts and therapeutic monitoring test results, are reported by testing laboratories to the local Health Officer where the client resides. Local HIV/AIDS treating physicians are then required to report certain demographic, risk and co-infection information to local Surveillance Coordinators prior to reporting summary information to the Office of AIDS and eventually to the CDC.
- 5) Can I get tested for HIV anonymously?
 - A) Yes if you test at an Alternative Testing Site (ATS) location. The new law requires anonymous testing sites to be available in each local health jurisdiction. A listing of the ATS locations and testing schedules is available on the Public Health Department's website at www.sbcphd.org (look under the HIV/AIDS Services), or you may find this information by contacting the HIV/AIDS services office at (805) 681-5120.
- 6) Is my personal information less secure with a names-based system?
 - A) The California HIV and AIDS Registry maintain strict security on client information and have a long history of protecting this information both through names-based reporting for AIDS for over 20 years and for HIV code-based system reporting for the last 5 years. This same system and additional security measures have been put into place to ensure that client information is protected.
- 7) What if I don't want my information reported?
 - A) Unfortunately, there are no exceptions to the law that requires this reporting.
- 8) If I still have questions or concerns, who should I contact?
 - A) Please discuss your concerns with the HIV/AIDS Services staff at (805) 681-5120.