

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Hepatitis C Screening Program

Connecting high risk clients to free and confidential hepatitis C screening

Background

It is estimated that 1.6% of the US population have been infected by the Hepatitis C virus and as many as 85% are chronically infected. In Colorado, we estimate more than 76,000 residents have ever been infected by HCV. A key strategy in addressing hepatitis C infection in Colorado has been to partner with community based organizations and local health departments throughout the state to provide free HCV testing for high-risk individuals. Since the beginning of this program, more than 10,000 high-risk HCV screenings have been conducted through these sites.

What are the benefits of this program to the client?

- Clients gain access to free and confidential HCV screening.
- Clients receive education regarding HCV risk factors, prevention, transmission, and resources.
- Symptoms of HCV infection may not appear until 20 to 30 years after infection, however, during this time the HCV virus may continue to damage the liver and can be transmitted to others.
- Detecting HCV early provides the client the opportunity to take steps to maintain liver health.
- Clients are provided with links to local services and support groups.
- Clients can learn about important steps to take to prevent transmission of HCV to others.

What are the benefits of this program to the contractor?

Through involvement in this program contractors are able to provide a broader range of services to the communities they serve; receive training and resources related to hepatitis C; and receive compensation for staff time dedicated to HCV screening services.

Who can be screened through this program?

HCV screening resources are limited and, therefore, are directed to those at greatest risk for HCV infection. Individuals are considered at high-risk for HCV and may be screened free of charge through CDPHE screening contracts if they have a history of any of the following:

- Have ever injected drugs;
- Received blood or blood products prior to 1992 (or outside the US);
- Were ever on hemodialysis; or
- Were sexual or needle-sharing partners of someone infected with HCV.

What resources do contracted testing sites receive?

- Contractor is reimbursed for each high-risk client tested.
- CDPHE provides payment of laboratory fees for all HCV screenings for high-risk clients. There are two options for EIA screening tests to detect HCV antibodies
 - If the contractor has a trained phlebotomist, blood is submitted to the CDPHE laboratory;
 - Sites without phlebotomy resources receive Home Access test kits that allow the client to use a finger stick method to collect his or her own blood.
- CDPHE provides training for pre and post-test counseling. Included in this training is information regarding health risks, health outcomes, risk reduction, available resources and support groups.

What are the reporting and contract requirements?

- Each site must agree to the program requirements outlined in the scope of work and sign a purchase order for the anticipated number of tests conducted during the project period.
- Contracted screening sites must submit monthly reimbursement statements.
- A patient demographic form must be completed for each test reimbursed under this contract.

If you are interested in including HCV screening in the services you provide to your clients please contact DeAnn Ryberg, Adult Viral Hepatitis Coordinator, Viral Hepatitis Program, CDPHE

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