

What is the Linkage to Care program?

The program assists HIV-positive individuals who are newly diagnosed or who are not currently accessing HIV/AIDS care by providing them with short-term, intensive support in engaging with an HIV care provider.

Successful L2C is an ongoing process during which HIV-positive individuals are able to assimilate their diagnosis, understand the implications of their HIV diagnosis to themselves and others, opt for appropriate care and services and commit to enhancing their own health. High-risk HIV-negative individuals will be able to identify high-risk behaviors and implement risk-reduction strategies.

Who is eligible?

Any person currently residing in Alaska who meets at least one of the criteria outlined below is eligible to receive L2C services:

- ▶ Newly diagnosed as HIV-positive
- ▶ HIV-positive and currently out of care. A person is considered out of care if the provider has been unsuccessful in reaching them and they have:
 - Not received a CD4 or Viral Load test in the preceding 12 months, OR
 - Not attended an HIV care appointment with their health care provider in the preceding 12 months
- ▶ HIV-positive and pregnant regardless of their current care status.
- ▶ High-risk HIV-negative.



For additional information or to refer a patient for services, health care providers and other interested individuals can call the Linkage to

Care Program at
907-269-8057

or fax a referral directly to the program's confidential fax line:

907-561-4239

<http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/hivstd/>



Linkage to Care

Connecting people with HIV to
the care they need.

FAQs

▶ How can I refer a patient for Linkage to Care Services?

Health care providers and other interested individuals can call the Linkage to Care Program at 907-269-8057 for additional information on the program or to refer a patient for services.

▶ How long does Linkage to Care last?

Program duration will vary depending on the needs of individual clients, but in general will take one to five sessions, across no more than 90 days. Clients will be linked with long-term HIV/AIDS medical case management services offered by agencies such as Alaskan AIDS Assistance Association and Interior AIDS Association for support beyond the L2C program.

Program duration for high-risk HIV-negative individuals will generally include one risk-reduction counseling session, with possible follow-up as requested by the client.

▶ Isn't it a HIPPA violation to provide the Linkage to Care program with contact information for patients who may be eligible for Linkage to Care services?

No. Disclosure of public health information without a release of information is allowed under HIPAA 45 C.F.R. 164.512(b). Alaska Administrative Code (7 AAC 27.005) allows for health care providers to provide the State of Alaska Section of Epidemiology with the names of previously known HIV-positive individuals who have been lost to care at their facility for identification and follow-up. Alaska Statute (AS 18.15.375) further allows the State Section of Epidemiology to make follow-up contact with individuals directly.

Why link patients to care?

Linkage to and retention in medical care is a top HIV prevention recommendation for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Patient engagement in care is directly correlated with positive health outcomes. For people living with HIV/AIDS, regular medical visits facilitate treatment adherence and clinical monitoring which lead to improved viral

suppression, reduced occurrence of opportunistic infection, decreased odds of antiretroviral drug resistance and reductions in mortality. Patients who are engaged in regular medical care and become virologically suppressed are also less likely to transmit the virus to others, making linkage to and retention in HIV care a key strategy for HIV prevention.

