



**Equitas  
Health**  
Care for All



Advocacy, HIV, and OH Prisons

LC 15

# Equitas Health Walnut Hills, Cincinnati

## Mission

Provide gender affirming and quality primary care service to patients in the tri-state area. (~800 pts served)



Primary Care  
Hormone Therapy  
Health Screening



Psychiatry  
Therapy  
Addiction Services  
Support Groups



HIV Management  
PrEP Education  
Grant Funding

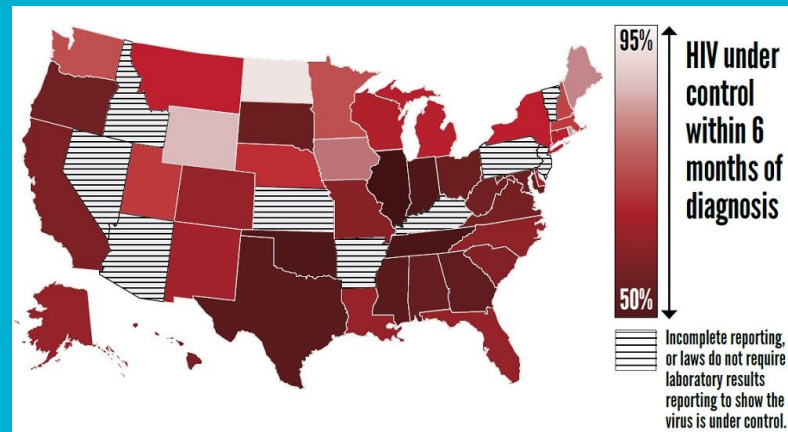
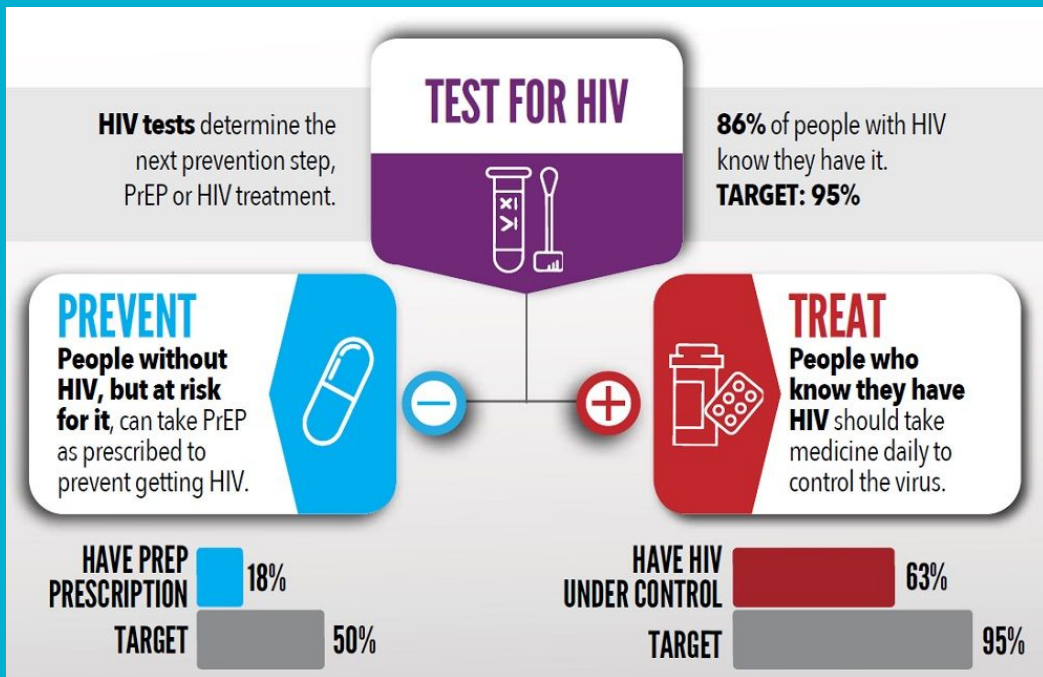


In-house Pharmacy



Housing Assistance  
Case Management  
Social Work  
Legal Services

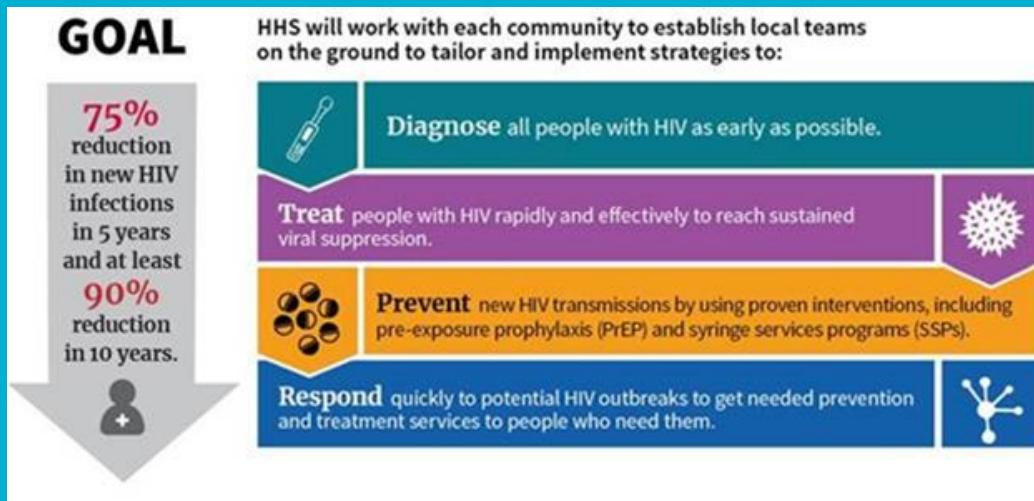
# HIV Epidemic



SOURCE: MMWR December 2019

# Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) Project

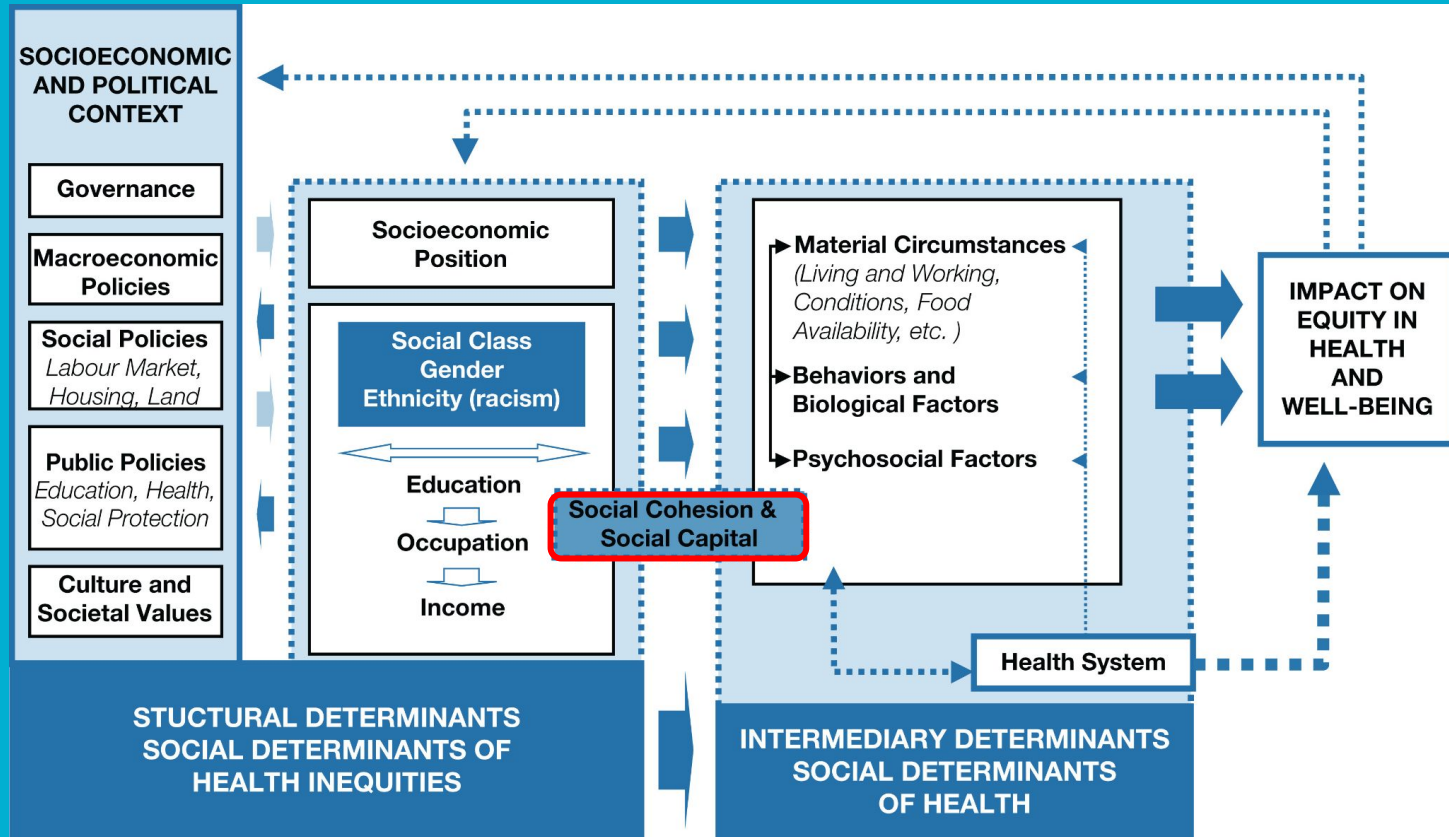
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Last year's project:

Connecting persons living with HIV with peer navigation services

# HIV Epidemic Social Determinants of Health



# Challenges Faced

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## Telehealth and Privacy

- Positives of Telehealth:
  - ◆ Support groups and the Name and Gender Change Legal Clinics offered by Equitas continued via Zoom
- Limitations of Telehealth:
  - ◆ Difficulty without stable wireless internet at home
  - ◆ Public free internet does not ensure privacy

## COVID-19 Pandemic's Effect on Ending the HIV Epidemic Project (EHE)

- Decrease in access to services due to restricted operating hours and limited personnel
  - ◆ Social support
  - ◆ PrEP and PEP treatment
  - ◆ HIV testing
- Rates of HIV testing and diagnosis especially affected

# Impact of COVID-19 on HIV Diagnoses

- Artificial depression in new HIV diagnoses across pandemic years
- Monthly HIV incidence in Hamilton County
  - ◆ 14.6 cases in 2019
  - ◆ 11 cases in 2020
  - ◆ 10.6 cases in 2021
- Number of cases did not differ during the peak of the pandemic between 2020 and 2021 ( $p=0.75$ )
- Swing in HIV cases occurred most dramatically during transition into the pandemic
  - ◆ Why?
    - HIV testing less available to at-risk populations
      - temporary closures
      - restricted operating hours
      - limited personnel

**Table 3. Hamilton County New HIV Infections**

Month	New Cases of HIV 2019	New Cases of HIV 2020
January	11	13
February	13	12
March	19	9
April	22	8
May	8	7
June	11	13
July	21	11
August	15	13
September	10	16
October	17	11
November	13	7
December	15	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>132</b>

**Table 3. Hamilton County New HIV Infections**

Month	New Cases of HIV 2020	New Cases of HIV 2021
January	13	7
February	12	18
March	9	10
April	8	12
May	7	9
June	13	12
July	11	5
August	13	10
September	16	15
October	11	11
November	7	10
December	12	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>127</b>

2019 vs 2020:  $p<0.03$

2019 vs 2021:  $p=0.02$

2020 vs 2021:  $p=0.75$



# Equitas–Community Impact

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## Healthcare services for the whole person

- Primary care
- Gender affirming care
- HIV specialty care
- PrEP
- Mental health counseling and psychiatry
- Pharmacy
- STI testing
- COVID-19 services

## Build community

- Virtual and in-person peer support groups

## Care navigators

- Help connect patients with healthcare information and resources
- Improve health outcomes through support and advocacy



Photos:  
Equitas Health  
<https://equitashealth.com/locations/cincinnati-medical-center/>



# Item 1: Appropriate Counseling for HIV Testing Both at Entry & During Incarceration

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## Background:

- 1.15% of people in state/federal prisons live with HIV nationally - mirrored in Ohio (2019-2020)
  - An underestimation:
    - People living with HIV/exposed fear testing due to stigma, potential segregation, and denial of visiting privileges or work assignments
    - May not understand transmission risk and lack of symptoms during latent infection
- Ohio has mandatory HIV testing for state and federal prisoners during intake, but no consent practices

## Suggested Practices

- 1) **Implement medical consent practices** - build provider trust, facilitate privacy, maintain confidentiality
- 2) **Offer evidence-based medications to prevent transmission** (PrEP & PEP)
- 3) **HIV education at an appropriate literacy level** - include methods of transmission, high risk & risk reducing practices, treatment, & the ability to live a healthy life with medical viral suppression

# Item 2: Providing HIV Testing and Connection to Care After Release from Incarceration

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## Background

- Declines in HIV positivity rates in prisons have been noted to be associated with a decrease in the total number of inmates
- Hamilton County's Community Linkage Coordination (CLC) program referred only 62 inmates with HIV to a Ryan White Part B-funded agency following their release
- According to data collected in 2016, inmates are only provided HIV testing at release upon request

## Suggested Practices

- 1) Routine HIV screening offerings followed by counseling during release planning
- 2) Increased funding for HIV CLC programs, expanding their capacity

# Item 3: Improving HIV Care in the Prison System

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## Background

- Inconsistent doses of many HIV medications can lead to drug resistance, reducing quality of life and making treatment more difficult
- Consistent care improves patient outcomes and reduces community burden, reducing long-term costs

## Suggested Practices

- 1) **Expand scope of on-site pharmacies** - critical medications need to be delivered efficiently and ongoing prescriptions must be maintained
- 2) **Adopt an electronic ordering system** - decrease loss or delays in fulfilling orders
- 3) **Increase on-site access to community-based medical professionals**

We have an unprecedented opportunity  
to end the HIV epidemic in America

The time is  
*Now.*

#EndHIVEpidemic