

- Awareness
- Updates
- Strategic Plan
- Health Access for All
- Racial Equity
- Mental Health and Substance Use

This newsletter is organized to align with the six Social Determinants of Health found in the *Ending the Epidemics Integrated Statewide Strategic Plan*, addressing the syndemic of HIV, HCV, and STIs in California. More about the *Strategic Plan* is available on the [Office of AIDS \(OA\) website](#).

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

We are excited to introduce you to **Felicia Bard**, our new OA Division Assistant! Felicia comes to OA with a diverse background, most notably as a prior contractor with both CDPH and the Department of Healthcare Access and Information, addressing COVID-19 vaccination efforts and providing grant management support for the Song-Brown Healthcare Workforce Training Program, respectively. Her most recent role was providing administrative support to Paratransit Inc. and their client as a contractor. In her free time, Felicia enjoys trying new restaurants and coffee shops around Sacramento, spending time with family, and testing new recipes.

Please join us in welcoming Felicia to the OA Team!

➤ Customer Service Week: Celebrating Our Call Center Team

Customer Service Week, celebrated in the first full week of October, began in 1984 when Congress recognized the importance of customer service across industries. For call centers, this week serves as a vital opportunity to highlight the unique challenges and achievements of our frontline team members.

In our AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) call center, our **Client Services Technicians** handle a myriad of unique inquiries daily,



Felicia

demonstrating patience, empathy, and problem-solving skills. During this week, we acknowledge the dedication and resilience of the **ADAP Client Services team**.

As we celebrate Customer Service Week, let's take a moment to applaud our outstanding ADAP Client Services call center! Your unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional service transforms each interaction into a positive experience. Thank you for your hard work – together, we continue to serve our ADAP and PrEP-AP clients, enrollment workers, and providers, and set the ultimate standard for excellence in customer support!

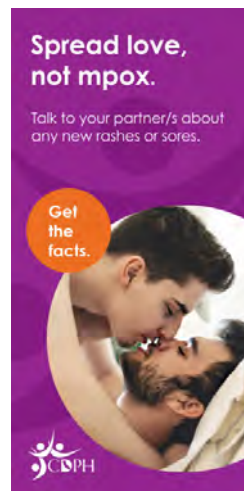
in California, 2022. NLAAD promotes HIV testing, prevention and treatment methods, and education in Latinx communities.

GENERAL UPDATES

> Mpx

OA is committed to providing updated information related to mpx. We have partnered with the Division of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC), a program within the Center of Infectious Diseases and have disseminated a number of documents in an effort to keep our clients and stakeholders informed. Please refer to the [DCDC website](#) to stay informed.

Mpx digital assets are available for LHJs and CBOs on DCDC's [Campaign Toolkit](#) website.



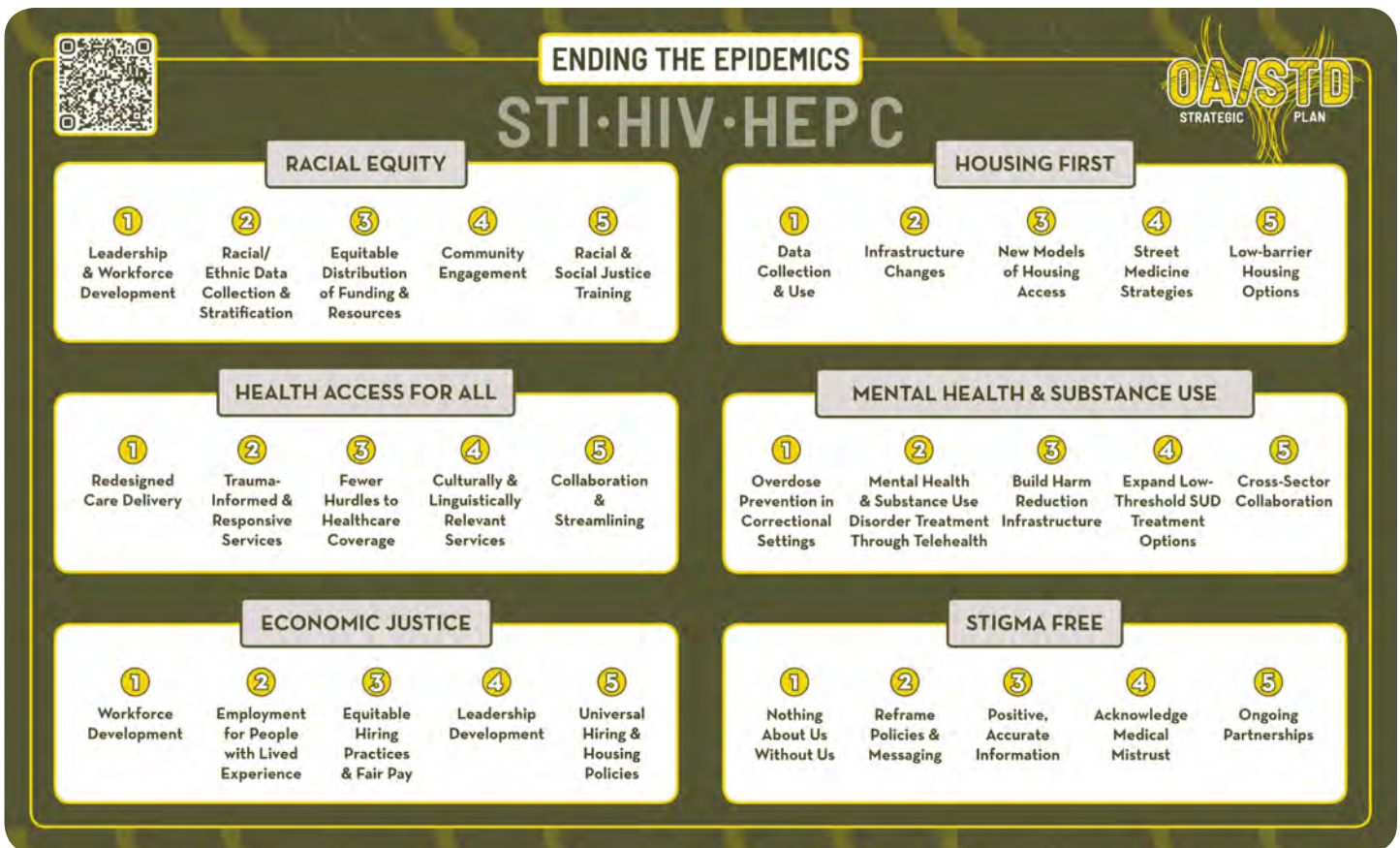
> HIV/STD/HCV Integration

We are re-initiating our integration discussions and moving forward with the necessary steps to integrate our HIV, STI, and HCV programs into a single new Division. We will continue to keep you apprised on our journey!



HIV AWARENESS

National Latinx HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD) is observed on October 15 to bring awareness to the impact of HIV/AIDS on the Latinx population. Social factors such as systemic racism, discrimination, HIV stigma, and limited access to quality health care influence health outcomes including those related to HIV. According to CDPH OA Surveillance Data, in 2022, the Latinx community accounted for 41% of living HIV cases and 57% of new HIV diagnoses, for more information the HIV/AIDS Epidemiology and Health Disparities in California 2022, is located on our OA website at [HIV/AIDS Epidemiology and Health Disparities](#)



The **visual above** is a high-level summary of our *Strategic Plan* that organizes 30 Strategies across six Social Determinants of Health (SDoH).

OA and STD Control Branch would like you to continue to use and share the *Strategic Plan* and the *Implementation Blueprint*. These documents address HIV as a syndemic with HCV and other STIs, through a SDoH lens.

For technical assistance in implementing the *Strategic Plan*, California LHJs and CBOs can visit [Facente Consulting's webpage](#).

HEALTH ACCESS FOR ALL

➤ Strategy 1: Redesigned Care Delivery

As we have previously mentioned, the **Mpox**

vaccine, JYNNEOS, became available on the commercial market on April 1, 2024. While CDPH has worked to ensure access to the vaccine through the LGBTQ+ Pride season, access to vaccine for people who are uninsured/underinsured in a local health jurisdiction may be impacted once the state supply is phased-out. Please consider using the state's turnkey resource, **Optum Serve**, to bolster vaccination efforts at large community or remaining seasonal Pride events, particularly those that would serve a large under/uninsured population.

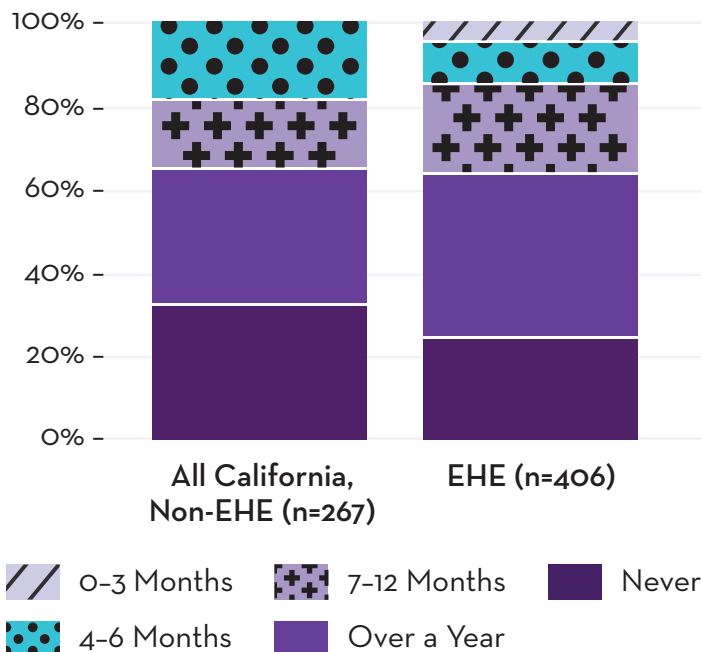
The **Mpox Turnkey Program** can deploy teams to indoor and outdoor sites and are equipped with all the necessary materials and supplies (except the vaccines themselves, which would be provided by the local health jurisdiction).

Local health jurisdictions interested in using the **Mpox Turnkey Program** can contact [Brenda Meza](mailto:brenda.meza@cdph.ca.gov), (brenda.meza@cdph.ca.gov) and [Justin Garcia](mailto:justin.garcia@cdph.ca.gov) (justin.garcia@cdph.ca.gov).

OA continues to implement its **Building Healthy Online Communities (BHOC)** self-testing program to allow for rapid OraQuick test orders in all jurisdictions in California. The program, **TakeMeHome**[®], (<https://takemehome.org/>) is advertised on gay dating apps, where users see an ad for home testing and are offered a free HIV-home test kit.

In August, 267 individuals in 36 counties ordered self-test kits, with 195 (73.0%) individuals ordering 2 tests. Additionally, OA's existing TakeMeHome Program continues in the six California Consortium Phase I Ending the HIV Epidemic in America counties. In the first 48 months, between September 1, 2020, and August 31, 2024, 13,048 tests have been distributed. This month, mail-in lab tests (including dried blood spot tests for HIV, syphilis, and Hepatitis C, as well as 3-site tests for gonorrhea and chlamydia) accounted for 117 (28.8%) of the 406 total tests distributed in EHE counties. Of those ordering rapid tests, 225 (77.9%) ordered 2 tests.

HIV Test History Among Individuals Who Ordered TakeMeHome Kits, August 2024



TAKEMEHOME



Additional Key Characteristics	EHE	All California, Non-EHE
Of those sharing their gender, were cisgender men	62.1%	64.1%
Of those sharing their race or ethnicity, identify as Hispanic or Latinx	42.1%	36.3%
Were 17-29 years old	39.9%	39.7%
Of those sharing their number of sex partners, reported 3 or more in the past year	47.6%	49.5%

Since September 2020, 1,492 test kit recipients have completed the anonymous follow up survey from EHE counties; there have been 616 responses from the California expansion since January 2023.

Survey Highlights	EHE	All California, Non-EHE
Would recommend TakeMeHome to a friend	94.2%	94.2%
Identify as a man who has sex with other men	51.1%	53.7%
Reported having been diagnosed with an STI in the past year	8.7%	10.7%

ADAP Insurance Assistance Program	Number of Clients Enrolled	Percentage Change from August
Employer Based Health Insurance Premium Payment (EB-HIPP) Program	554	+ 1.00%
Office of AIDS Health Insurance Premium Payment (OA-HIPP) Program	5,404	- 0.99%
Medicare Premium Payment Program (MPPP)	2,204	+ 1.10%
Total	8,162	+ 1.01%

Source: ADAP Enrollment System

➤ Strategy 3: Fewer Hurdles to Healthcare Coverage

As of October 2, 2024, there are 221 PrEP-AP enrollment sites and 245 clinical provider sites that currently make up the [PrEP-AP Provider network](#).

[Data on active PrEP-AP clients](#) can be found in the three tables displayed on page six of this newsletter.

As of October 2, 2024, the number of ADAP clients enrolled in each respective ADAP Insurance Assistance Program are shown in the chart at the top of this page.

RACIAL EQUITY

➤ Strategy 4: Community Engagement



The Fall 2024 In-Person Meeting for the **California Planning Group (CPG)** will be November 20–22 in Riverside, CA at the [Marriott Riverside at the Convention Center](#).

The meeting's theme will be focused on self-care and healing. It will feature community-led and state-led presentations on storytelling, doxyPEP, and LGBTQ+ health. It will also spotlight CPG members and their work in reaching communities most impacted by HIV.

CPG and OA welcomes the participation and input of the general public. We highly encourage you to join us at the Fall meeting to explore strategies for rest, healing, and self-care as we continue our efforts to enhance health outcomes within our community!

For [more information about CPG](#), please visit our website at https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OA_CPG.aspx.

➤ Strategy 5: Racial and Social Justice Training

The CDC offers free capacity building assistance (CBA) through training, technical assistance, and other resources to reduce HIV infection and improve health outcomes for people with HIV in the United States. Its CBA Provider Network provides CBA on a vast variety of HIV preventions related topics, including enhancing cultural competency for a successful HIV program, cultural responsiveness and humility for people who

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Insurance Coverage:

Current Age	PrEP-AP Only		PrEP-AP With Medi-Cal		PrEP-AP With Medicare		PrEP-AP With Private Insurance		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	398	11%	---	---	---	---	24	1%	422	12%
25 - 34	1,194	34%	---	---	---	---	175	5%	1,369	39%
35 - 44	813	23%	---	---	2	0%	137	4%	952	27%
45 - 64	410	12%	---	---	13	0%	98	3%	521	15%
65+	28	1%	---	---	212	6%	5	0%	245	7%
TOTAL	2,843	81%	0	0%	227	6%	439	13%	3,509	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Race/Ethnicity:

Current Age	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	219	6%	3	0%	54	2%	16	0%	2	0%	79	2%	2	0%	47	1%	422	12%
25 - 34	765	22%	4	0%	136	4%	93	3%	8	0%	265	8%	11	0%	87	2%	1,369	39%
35 - 44	536	15%	3	0%	84	2%	53	2%	4	0%	213	6%	5	0%	54	2%	952	27%
45 - 64	279	8%	---	---	53	2%	22	1%	1	0%	132	4%	1	0%	33	1%	521	15%
65+	20	1%	---	---	4	0%	6	0%	---	---	204	6%	---	---	11	0%	245	7%
TOTAL	1,819	52%	10	0%	331	9%	190	5%	15	0%	893	25%	19	1%	232	7%	3,509	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Gender and Race/Ethnicity:

Gender	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	63	2%	---	---	8	0%	8	0%	1	0%	12	0%	---	---	6	0%	98	3%
Male	1,629	46%	9	0%	301	9%	178	5%	14	0%	848	24%	18	1%	200	6%	3,197	91%
Trans	103	3%	---	---	15	0%	4	0%	---	---	15	0%	1	0%	5	0%	143	4%
Unknown	24	1%	1	0%	7	0%	---	---	---	---	18	1%	---	---	21	1%	71	2%
TOTAL	1,819	52%	10	0%	331	9%	190	5%	15	0%	893	25%	19	1%	232	7%	3,509	100%

All PrEP-AP charts prepared by: ADAP Fiscal Forecasting Evaluation and Monitoring (AFFEM) Section, ADAP and Care Evaluation and Informatics Branch, Office of AIDS. Client was eligible for PrEP-AP as of run date: 09/30/2024 at 12:01:35 AM
Data source: ADAP Enrollment System. Site assignments are based on the site that submitted the most recent application.

inject drugs (PWID), diversity, equity, and inclusion, motivational interviewing, planning a condom distribution program, and so much more! To [submit a CBA request](#), please contact the Local Capacity Building and Program Development Unit at CBA@cdph.ca.gov.

MENTAL HEALTH & SUBSTANCE USE

➤ Strategy 3: Build Harm Reduction Infrastructure

RESEARCH: Overdose Prevention Centers as Spaces of Safety, Trust, and Inclusion

Overdose prevention centers (OPC) are spaces where people bring their own drugs to use, have access to sterile supplies, and are supervised by trained staff to intervene in the event of an overdose. Currently, OPCs are still illegal to operate in most states in the U.S., including California. A new study that was published in Drug and Alcohol Review concludes that OPCs can enable participants to develop feelings of safety and trust that build longer term trajectories of social inclusion with potential to improve other aspects of their health.

The study, *Overdose Prevention Centers as Spaces of Safety, Trust, and Inclusion: A Causal Pathway Based on a Realist Review*, found that conditions of OPCs as a safe space build trust among their participants and can often generate other positive outcomes including less risky drug use, reductions in blood borne viruses and injection-related infections, and access to housing.

To view this study, go to: [Overdose prevention centres as spaces of safety, trust and inclusion: A causal pathway based on a realist review - Stevens - 2024 - Drug and Alcohol Review - Wiley Online Library](#).

RESOURCES: Gender Affirming Harm Reduction Toolkit

In harm reduction, how services are delivered are often as important as what services are provided. To help improve the quality of services for transgender, gender non-conforming, and nonbinary (TGNCNB) communities, National Harm Reduction Coalition's Lighthouse Learning Collective has published a toolkit for syringe services programs on gender-affirming harm reduction.

The toolkit includes an organizational assessment to highlight areas for growth and opportunities as well as information on chemsex, overdose response and prevention, sex work, and how to ask for and write up a more affirming sexual health history, and more. Also included in the resource are self-reflection questions to guide understanding of the toolkit and content to continue learning and expanding knowledge.

To view the toolkit, go to: [Gender Affirming Harm Reduction: A Toolkit for Syringe Service Programs](#).

For [questions regarding *The OA Voice*](#), please send an e-mail to angelique.skinner@cdph.ca.gov.

