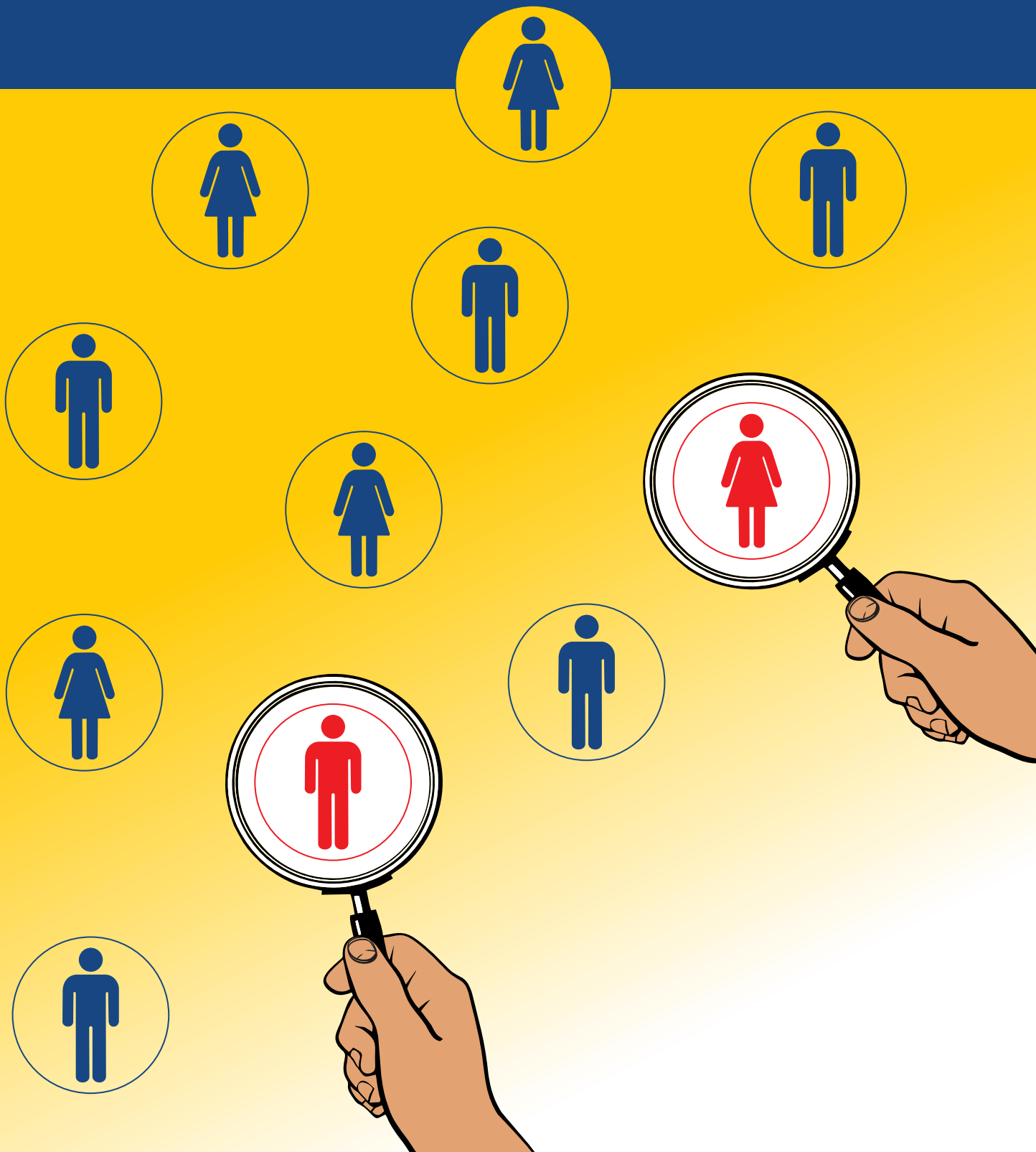






SOP on Assisted Partner Notification for Index Testing



Partner Notification is the sixth step of Index Testing Services. There are four methods of notifying partners of an index client as per WHO Partner Notification Guidelines. These notification strategies are

Section 1

Options for Notifying the Partners or Contacts About HIV Testing

 Client referral	You tell your partner about your HIV status and encourage him or her to come to the health facility for an HIV test.	 Provider referral	A counsellor or a health care provider will call or visit your partner and inform them that they need to test for HIV.
 Contract referral	You and the counsellor will work together to notify your partner. You will have 14 days to tell your partner. After which, the counsellor will contact your partner after seeking consent.	 Dual referral	The counsellor/provider will sit with you and your partner and support you as you tell your partner your HIV status.

Section 2

Maintain Confidentiality

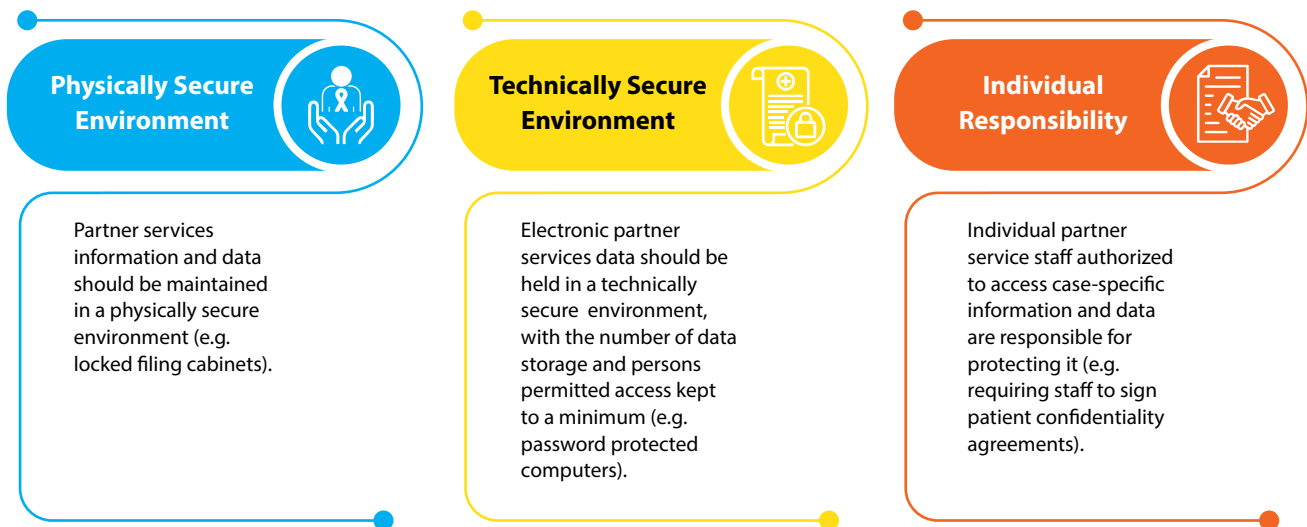
Confidentiality i.e. protection of personal information should be maintained throughout the process of partner notification.

- ⇒ You need to give your client an assurance that what is said will be in confidence (that it will stay secret between you and the client) because, unless you are able to do that, the client is unlikely to be open with you.
- ⇒ It is our duty to never reveal the information that clients tell us without our clients consent
- ⇒ Both the confidentiality of the index client and all named partners and children should be maintained at all times.
- ⇒ The identity of the index client should never be revealed to the listed partner(s)
- ⇒ And no information about partner/s should be conveyed back to the index client (unless explicit consent from all parties is obtained).
- ⇒ It critical to note that even the testing status of the partner/s should not be disclosed with the index client unless consent is sought for that specific purpose.

The following information should be strictly kept confidential:

- ⇒ Information that would allow others to identify the index client
- ⇒ Their name, date of birth, address, phone number, and other personal identifiers.
- ⇒ Their HIV diagnosis and treatment status
- ⇒ Anything they talked about during their interview and/or clinical exam

Following are important steps to maintain confidentiality of patient information:



Section 3

Instructions for Counsellor/Provider on Partner Notification

If the Client Chooses Provider Referral

- Begin contacting partner(s) via telephone using the “Script for Partner Notification: Phone Call” or home visits using the “Script for Partner Notification: Home Visit”.
- Before you call, secure a private place and plan for what you will say. Remember do not give any information to anyone other than the partner. Confirm the partner’s identity by asking him or her for their date of birth and home address or any other identifier unique to the individual only to ensure identity and make sure the correct person is answering.
- Be ready to respond to questions from the partner about how you obtained his/her information.
- Plan what you will say and how you will solve problem, if you run into a third party (e.g. parent, spouse) who wants to know why you’re there or why you are calling.
- You may want to consider leaving a confidential “referral letter” that can be left in a plain, sealed envelope if the partner is not there. This letter should include the counselor’s name and phone number.
- Sample scripts may be used for leaving voice mails and text messages.
- Document the outcomes of all attempts to contact the partner on the “Outcome of Partner Testing Services Form”.

If the Client Chooses Client Referral

- Help the client make a plan (where, when, using what words)
- Provide conversation starters for example:

“I went to the clinic for a check-up the other day [or for xyz reason] and the doctor/nurse was encouraging people to get tested for HIV. So I got tested and learned that I have HIV. I wanted you to know so that you could also get an HIV test. There are medicine now for treating HIV that can help us live a long time.”

- Brainstorm some questions/reactions that their partner might have and help the client determine some possible answers/responses.
- Allow the index client to practice with you until they feel confident that they can say the words.
- Give them the Referral Slip which includes information on where and how to test for HIV.
- Instruct the client to give the referral slip to their partner(s) at the end of their conversation.
- Set an appointment with the index client in one month to follow up and confirm that the partner(s) have been tested.

If the Client Chooses Contract Referral

- Follow the same steps as for client referral
- Identify a date 14 days or a predetermined period of time from today's date and agree with the index clients that they themselves will notify and refer their partner(s) or bring their child(ren) for HIV testing by this date.
- Record the date on the Partner Information Form.
- Remind the client that if their partner(s) do not come for an HIV test by that date, you will call to get his or her permission to directly contact the partner(s).
- After 14 days or the predetermined period have passed, call the index client and determine if the partner(s) have been tested.
- If not, obtain the client's permission to contact the partner(s) and follow the methods for provider referral.
- If the client does not provide permission to contact their partner(s) after several rounds of counselling, record this outcome on the Outcome of Partner Testing Services Form.

If the Client Chooses Dual Referral

- Identify how the client would like to notify the partner: in the facility or in the home?
- If in the facility, schedule an appointment for the client to bring in their partner.
- Give the invitation letter to the client to share with their partner, inviting the partner for health services at the facility
- If in the home, schedule a date when you will visit the client and his/her partner in their home.
- You cannot break confidentiality by being the one to disclose the client's status to the partner.

Note: You can only reveal the client's status to the partner if you are testing both partners in a couples testing and counseling session. If you are not testing both partners, then the client will have to disclose his or her status to the partner in your presence.

SCRIPTS

Tips and Scripts for Telling Your Partner about HIV Testing

Make a Plan



Many people are afraid of telling their partner that they have HIV. It is helpful to make a plan for how and when you will tell your partner.



Think about how you would like to be told, if your partner was disclosing to you.



Choose a day and a time when you and your partner will have time to talk.



You also want to pick a time when your partner is not stressed or angry, and has not been drinking alcohol.



Pick a private place where you feel comfortable and safe. You may want to have someone in the next room to help and support you, if needed.

Anticipate Reactions

Think about how your partner may react. Your partner may:

Offer you support or comfort you



Feel confused or sad



Accuse you of bringing HIV into the relationship or household



What questions may your partner ask you? How will you answer these questions?



Not believe it's true



Feel angry



Think about how you will respond to these reactions.



Start the Conversation

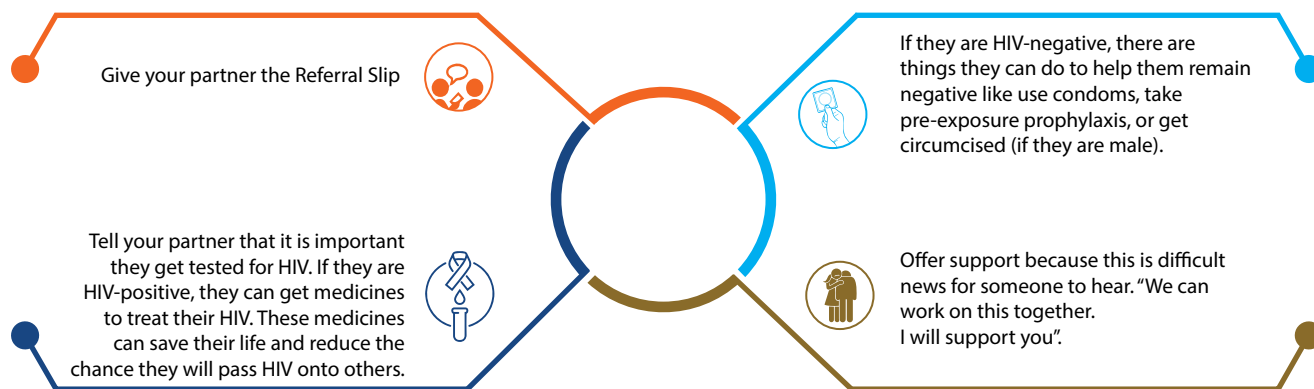


"I went to the clinic for a check-up the other day [or for xyz reason] and the doctor/nurse was encouraging people to get tested for HIV. So I got tested and learned that I have HIV. I wanted you to know so that you could also get an HIV test. There are medicine now for treating HIV that can help us live a long time."



"HIV is very common in our community. I decided to go for an HIV test. It turns out that I am HIV-positive. I already started on treatment. I think it is important that you also get tested for HIV so you can know your HIV status."

Encourage Your Partner to Get Tested for HIV



Practice First!

Practice what you will say and do ahead of time. You can do that now with your health care provider or later by yourself in your home. This will help you feel comfortable on the day you actually tell your partner.

Script for Partner Testing Services: Phone Call

Good day. My name is.....and I am a counsellor/health care provider at.....[Facility Name]..... I am looking for partner's name..... ?

[IF NOT]: Is __partner's name_____ available?

[If partner is not available]: Thanks. I'll try back later.

[If YES]: I have some important information for you. Is now a good time to talk?

[If NO]: When would be a better time for me to call you?

[If YES]: Before we begin, I just need to confirm that I am speaking with the right person. Can you please tell me your date of birth and home address?

If the person is unable or unwilling to confirm their date of birth and home address, ask them to come to the health facility for the information. Do not proceed with the notification until you can confirm their identity.

[After confirming date of birth and address]: "We have recently learned that you may have been exposed to HIV by conducting anonymous surveys through different apps where your name with lot of other names has come up. It is important that you come to[Name of health facility]..... for an HIV test so that you can learn your HIV status. If you are HIV-negative, we can give you information on how you can remain free from HIV. If you are HIV-positive, we can give you medicines to treat your HIV. These medicines will help you live a long life and reduce your chance of passing HIV onto others.

HIV testing services are available Monday – Friday from 8:30 in the morning until 5:00 in the evening. Alternatively, we can send a counsellor out to your home for an HIV test. Which option would you prefer?

[FACILITY TEST]: What day would you like to come in for an HIV test?

[HOME TEST]: What date and time would you prefer for the counsellor to come to your home for an HIV test?

Script for Partner Testing Services: SMS Text Messages

Messages should be clear, concise, and professional.

Sample First Message

"Hello. My name is..... and I am with the (insert name of Health Department, Facility, or Community Organization). I have important information about your personal health. Please call me as soon as possible at XXX-XXX-XXXX."

If the Person Does Not Respond to Your First Message within 24 Hours, Send a Second Message Urging the Person To Call You

"This is.....again with the (insert name of Health Department, Facility, or Community Organization). This is my second attempt to contact you. I have urgent health information for you. Please call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX."

If the Person Does Not Respond to Either of Your First Two Messages a Final Text May Be Sent

Hello. This is..... I have been trying to contact you about important health information. Please call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. This is my last attempt to contact you."

If the Person Responds with a Text Message Requesting You to Send More Information

"I am not able to give health information through a text message. This is urgent and needs your immediate attention. Please call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX."

Script for Partner Testing Services: Phone Call

Good day. My name is.....and I am a counsellor/health care provider at.....[Facility Name]..... I am looking for partner's name..... Is he/she around?

[IF NOT]: Ok, thanks. Do you know when he or she will be back?

[Once the partner is in front of you]: Is there a private place that we can talk?

[Once you are in private area where others cannot overhear]: I have some important information for you. We have recently learned that you may have been exposed to HIV. It is important that you get tested for HIV so that you can learn your HIV status. If you are HIV-negative, we can give you information on how you can remain free from HIV. If you are HIV-positive, we can give you medicines to treat your HIV. These medicines will help you live a long life and reduce your chance of passing HIV onto others.

I can test you for HIV right now. Or, if you prefer, you can go to[Name of health facility]..... for an HIV test. HIV testing services are available Monday – Friday from 8:30 in the morning until 5:00 in the evening. Which option would you prefer?

[HOME TEST]: Provide pre-test counseling, informed consent, and post-test counseling according to national HTS guidelines.

[FACILITY TEST]: What day would you like to come to the health facility for an HIV test?

Script 1: Partner Invitation Letter

Sample Partner Invitation Letter

[INSERT LOGO OF Facility/DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HERE]

Date:.....

Dear,

At.....name of health facility)....., we are committed to ensuring all our community members have the information they need to lead healthy lives. We have some important health information to share with you. We would like to invite you and your partner to come to(name of health facility).....on (date of appointment).....at (time of appointment).....so we can provide this information to you. All services are free of charge.

Thank you for your kind attention to this request and we look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely,

(Nurse in Charge/Hospital Administrator)

Script 2: Technology for Index Testing

- Many people may use the internet or mobile apps to find sexual partners. • Just like traditional names and phone numbers, email addresses, screen names, and online identifiers can be used to contact someone as well
- However, email addresses and screen names can be changed easily and quickly.
- During the elicitation process you should ask about partners the index client met online.
 - In addition to name and phone numbers, screen names and email addresses can be used to contact partner(s)
 - Confirming the exact spelling is extremely important
- It is not unusual to lose contact with a person because of a changed screen name.
- It may be possible to locate a contact that has changed their screen name by reviewing profile information, pictures and other identifying information, but caution should be heeded to confirm that the profile name belongs to the person being sought.
- When conducting Index Testing through a website, it is important to review the websites Terms of Service (TOS). Service agreements will describe both acceptable and unacceptable behaviors allowed on the site or app.
- Maintain professionalism when reaching out to contacts.
- Remember that when communicating online or via text, the recipient of your message cannot infer your meaning or may infer the wrong meaning.
- Avoid use of acronyms, icons, and emoticons, and other terminology or vernacular that gives the appearance of being overly casual.

At a minimum, it is important all notification messages include the following information:

- name of the contacting counselor
- service organization or health facility affiliation
- contact information of the counselor (best to use email address associated with organization/facility)
- brief message encouraging the partner to contact the counselor as soon as possible.



Disclaimer: This publication was adapted from PEPFAR and WHO Partner Notification Guidelines, with funding from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Government. This SOP is intended for use by service providers in order to provide information on Index Testing Guidelines. For questions about the contents or use, please contact I-TECH India (www.itech-india.org).

