



# STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LINKAGE TO CARE

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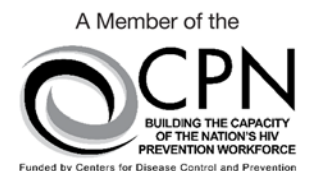
August 16, 2016

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# Learning Objectives

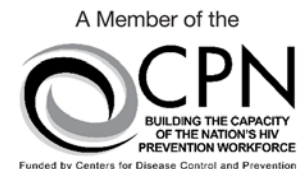
- Define Linkage to Care
- Identify elements of a Linkage to Care program for HIV-positive people

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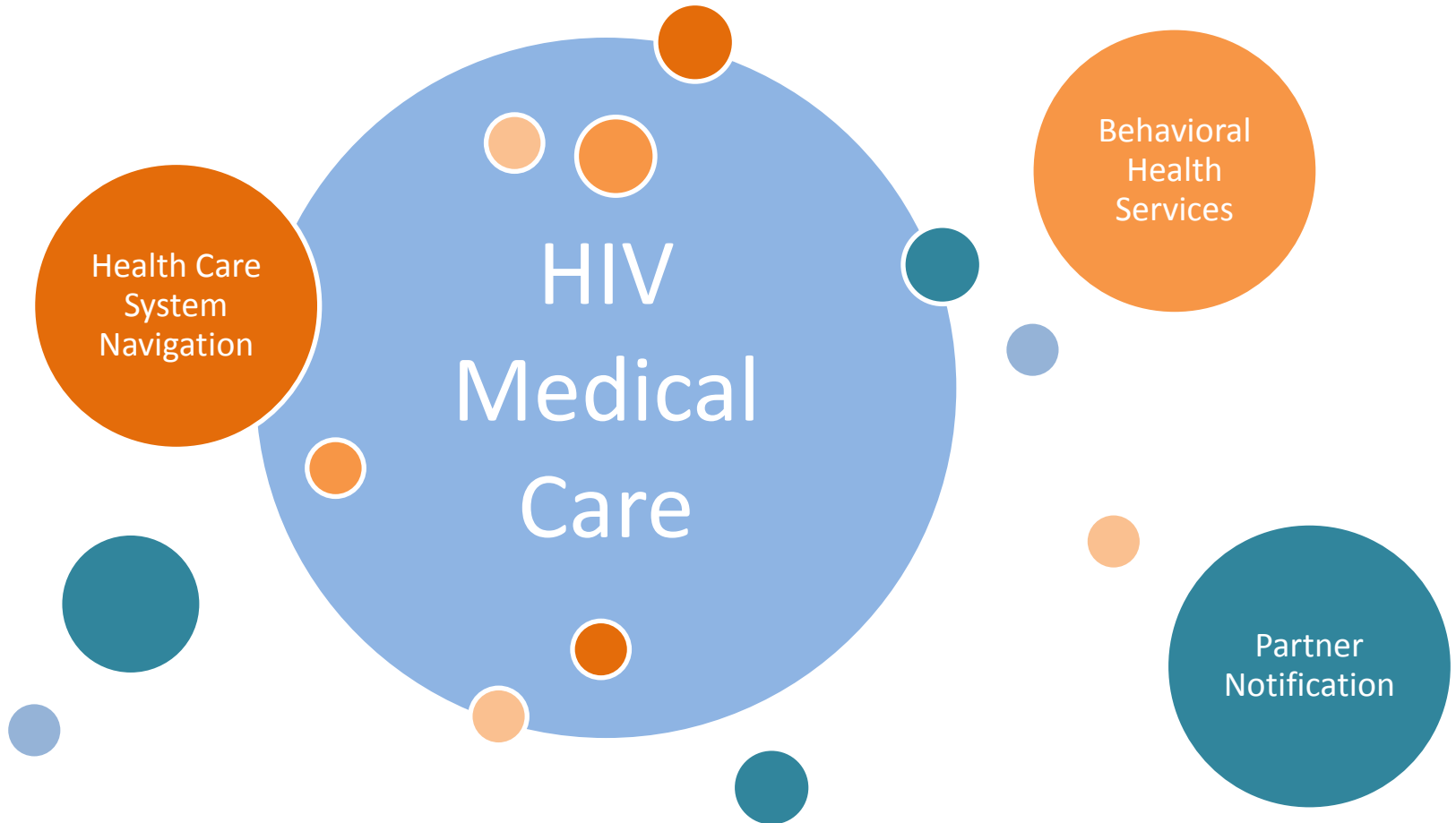
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# What is Linkage to Care?



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# Benefits of HIV Medical Care

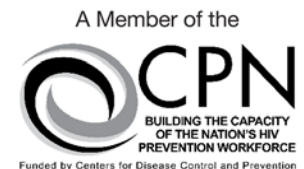
- Individual
  - Viral suppression
  - Improved health and increased longevity
  - Reduced chance of HIV transmission to sexual and injection partners
- Community
  - Lower community viral load
  - Fewer new infections
  - Reduced health care costs

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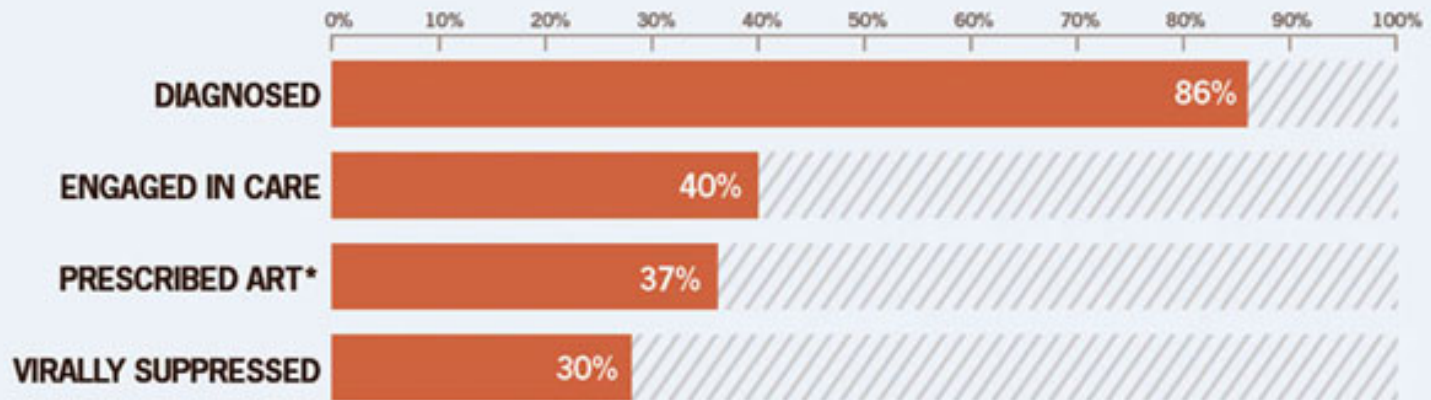
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# HIV Care Continuum

## HIV Care Continuum Shows Where Improvements are Needed

In the US, 1.2 million people are living with HIV. Of those:



SOURCES: CDC National HIV Surveillance System and Medical Monitoring Project, 2011.

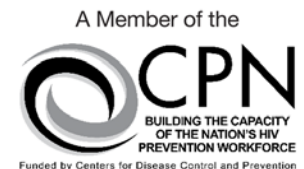
\*Antiretroviral therapy

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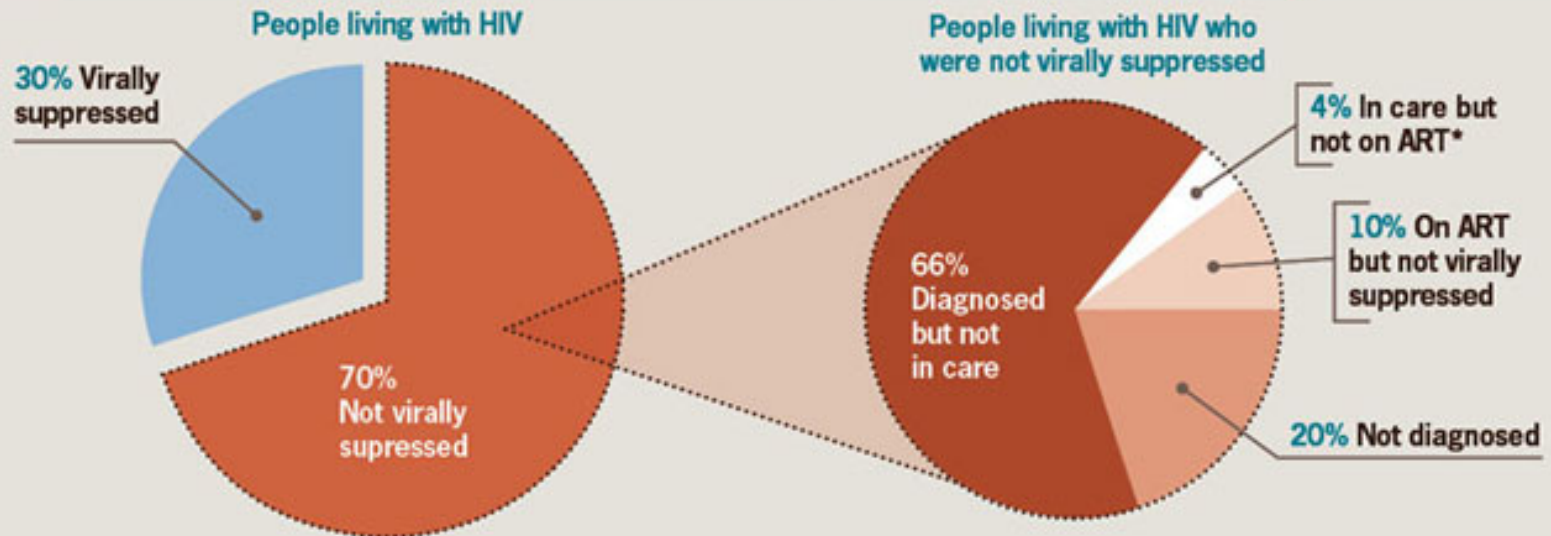
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# Achieving Viral Suppression: More People with HIV Need to be in Medical Care



SOURCES: CDC National HIV Surveillance System and Medical Monitoring Project, 2011.

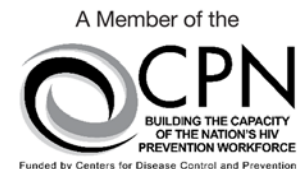
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# Barriers to Engagement in Care

- Cost: Health care, prescriptions, transportation, lost wages
- Access: provider availability and quality, linguistic and cultural appropriateness, location
- Stigma and Discrimination: HIV status, sexual or drug-related activity, membership in a marginalized group
- Medication Concerns: Side effects, drug interactions
- Other Health Conditions: Mental health, substance use, violence or other trauma

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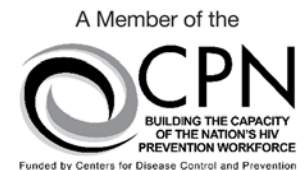
# Elements of Successful Linkage to Care

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# Referral vs. Linkage vs. Navigation

- Referral: Provide client with information about referral services
- Linkage: Ensure that client successfully accesses referral services
- Navigation: Offer support for ongoing engagement in referral services

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# Elements of Successful Linkage to Care

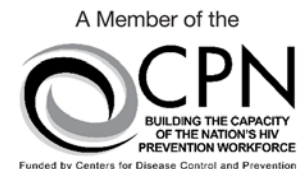
- Assess client's needs and help them identify and prioritize referrals
- Assist in making a plan of when and how to access services
- Facilitate access to services by assisting client with overcoming barriers
- Confirm and document linkage

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# Assess and Prioritize Referral Needs

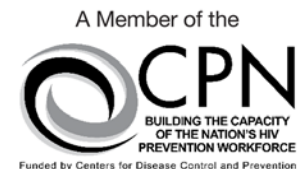
- Consider the factors that may influence the client's willingness and ability to connect to HIV care
- Help client determine referral priorities
- Among the client's priorities, focus on referrals that have the greatest impact on client's health

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# Plan the Referral

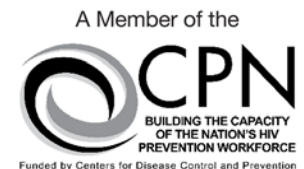
- Help client plan for when and how they will access HIV care
- Identify strategies to overcome potential barriers

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# Facilitate Access to Services

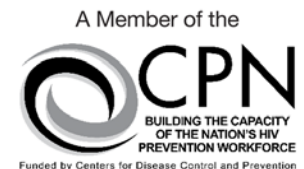
- Navigate client through health care systems
- Connect client to psychosocial and other support
- Assist client with logistics required to access services

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# Confirm and Document Linkage

- Inform client of intent to follow up on their progress
- Use release of information forms to obtain information from provider
- Ask for feedback from the client on their experience
- Document interaction as required

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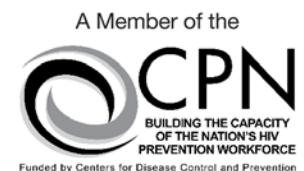
# Building Agency Capacity for Successful Linkage to Care

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# Building Agency Capacity for Successful Linkage to Care

- Assess referral and linkage needs of client population
- Assess existing agency resources
- Identify referral and linkage partners
- Establish referral and linkage partnerships
- Operationalize partnerships

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# Assess Referral and Linkage Needs

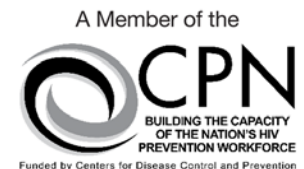
- Identify priority population(s)
- Request input from key stakeholders on which factors promote, and which barriers prevent, successful linkage to care

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# Assess Agency Capacity

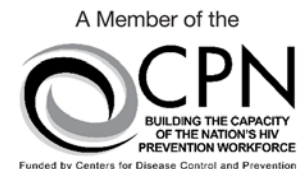
- Identify existing expertise and human resources
- Seek out professional development or recruit additional support as needed
- Create a plan for ongoing staff training and evaluation

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# Identify Referral and Linkage Partners

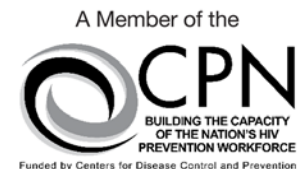
- Research local providers to address population needs
- Compile information on a range of standards, including quality of care, accessibility, cultural appropriateness, and client satisfaction

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# Establish Partnerships

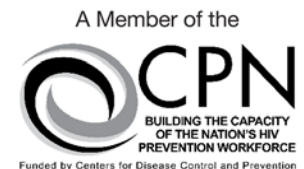
- Conduct outreach to referral providers
- Assess provider willingness and ability to accept referrals and participate in monitoring
- Select providers with capacity and cultural competency to address needs of priority population(s)

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# Operationalize Partnerships

- Establish expectations and responsibilities for each referral partner
- Create policies and procedures for all linkage activities
- Identify point people who can help address issues as they arise
- Formalize key partnerships with written agreements

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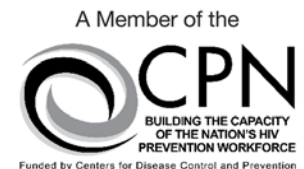
# Effective Interventions and Best Practices

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# Linkage to Care Strategies

- Antiretroviral Treatment and Access to Services (ARTAS)
- HIV Navigation Services (HNS)
- Linkage Case Management
- Medical Case Management
- Outreach and Peer Support

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# Anti-Retroviral Treatment and Access to Services (ARTAS)

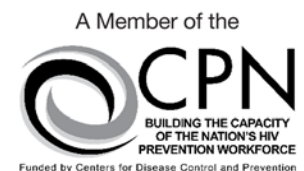
- Engages people recently diagnosed with HIV
- Employs individual-level, multi-session, time-limited intervention
- Encourages client to identify and use personal strengths, create specific goals, and establish an effective working relationship with linkage counselor

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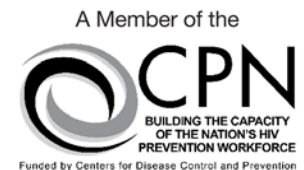
# Priority Populations

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# Young MSM of Color

- Disproportionately high rates of HIV
- Lower rates of testing and status awareness
- Less likely to engage in regular HIV-related health care

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# Linkage to Care for Young MSM of Color

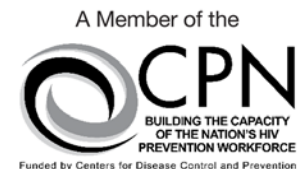
- Respectful and positive provider relationship
- Low threshold for accessing services
- Assertive logistical support, warm hand off
- Youth-specific activities
- Assistance with competing health priorities

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# Additional Resources to Serve Young MSM of Color

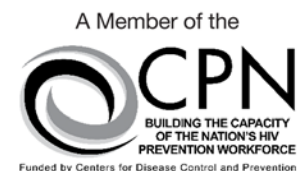
- [Special Projects of National Significance  
Young MSM of Color Initiative](#)
- [Addressing Stigma: A Blueprint for Improving HIV/STD  
Prevention and Care Outcomes for Black & Latino Gay Men](#)
- [The Adaptation Guide: Adapting HIV Behavior Change  
Interventions for Gay and Bisexual Latino and Black Men](#)
- [Best Practices in HIV Prevention: Translating Innovation into  
Action](#)

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# Transgender Women

- Disproportionately high rates of HIV
- Lower rates of testing and status awareness
- Less likely to engage in regular HIV-related health care

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# Linkage to Care for Transgender Women

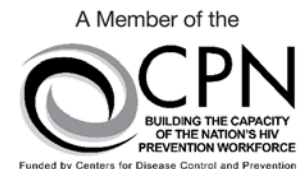
- Importance of gender affirmation
- Integration of hormone and antiretroviral therapies
- Assistance with competing health priorities
- Peer support

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# Additional Resources to Serve Transgender Women

- [Barriers and facilitators to engagement and retention in care among transgender women living with human immunodeficiency virus](#)
- [Special Projects of National Significance Enhancing Engagement and Retention in Quality HIV Care for Transgender Women of Color](#)
- [National Transgender HIV Testing Day Toolkit](#)
- [Guidelines for the Primary and Gender-Affirming Care of Transgender and Gender Nonbinary People](#)
- [Affirmative Care for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People Best Practices for Front-line Health Care Staff](#)

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