Adapting Outreach Services: Discreet HIV Testing for Rural Kentucky MSM Populations & **More**

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2022

NATIONAL
RYAN WHITE
CONFERENCE
ON HIV CARE & TREATMENT

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Jim Thacker has no relevant financial interests to disclose.

Chelsey Reid has no relevant financial interests to disclose.

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Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will be able to:

- 1. Will be able to articulate a better understanding of barriers to HIV testing and linkage to care for the rural MSM. population.

- 2. Will be able to identify successful outreach strategies used to better meet the needs of the rural MSM population.

- 3. Will be able to discuss how new pre-screening strategies help expand targeted testing.

The Target4 Project - Program Structure

- Team Leads provide oversight and organize efforts within regions
- EIS (early intervention services) Health Education Coordinators, Health Education Coordinator Associates, and Peer Prevention Specialists are embedded within local health departments, community based organizations, and AIDS service organizations to provide EIS to targeted populations
- HIV, Hepatitis C, and syphilis testing are integrated into local harm reduction programs and provided via targeted outreach to vulnerable populations
- The Target4 project regional teams work with designated programs throughout the region (local health departments, community based organizations, and AIDS services organizations) to provide services at regularly designated intervals (quarterly, monthly, weekly)
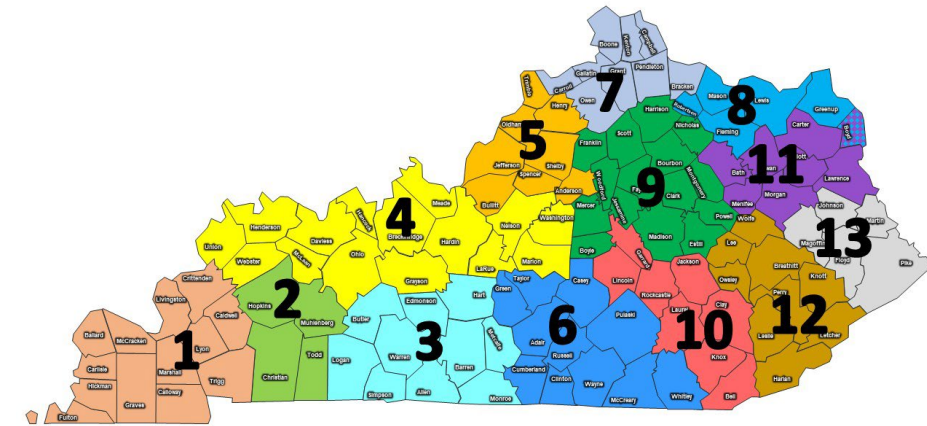
The Target4 Project
Early Intervention Services – EIS

The Target4 Project is built on the 4 components of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) allowable service - Early Intervention Services (EIS)
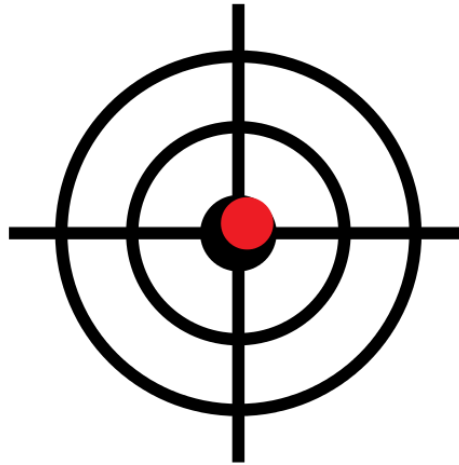
Targeted HIV Testing
Referral Services
Linkage to HIV Care
Health Education & Risk Reduction

Targeted HIV Testing Program

Identify persons with undiagnosed HIV infection and link them to HIV medical care

Identify previously diagnosed individuals living with and link them to HIV medical care

- Focuses efforts in order to identify as many undiagnosed infections as possible
- Concentrates limited resources (supplies and manpower)
- Maximizes identification of undiagnosed HIV infection
- Opportunity to establish rapport and trust with client
- Uses data to focus program efforts:
 - On the **Right** Populations
  - In the **Right** Settings

Pre-Screening Tool

Have you participated in any of the following activities within the indicated time periods?

Activity	3 Months (Y/N)	6 Months (Y/N)	1 Year (Y/N)	5 Years (Y/N)
Sex w/o a condom with a same sex partner (males only)	--	--	--	--
Sex w/o a condom with an opposite sex partner	--	--	--	--
Injected or snorted drugs	--	--	--	--
Shared needles or works (straws, rinse water, cottons, cookers) with anyone	--	--	--	--
Sex w/o a condom with a male who has also had sex with other males (females only)	--	--	--	--
Sex w/o a condom with a person who uses needles for non-medical use	--	--	--	--

Pre-Screening Tool

Using the tool screens out almost 20% of those who ask to be tested at public facing events in high risk areas

Screened

- 81% Tested
- 19% Not Tested
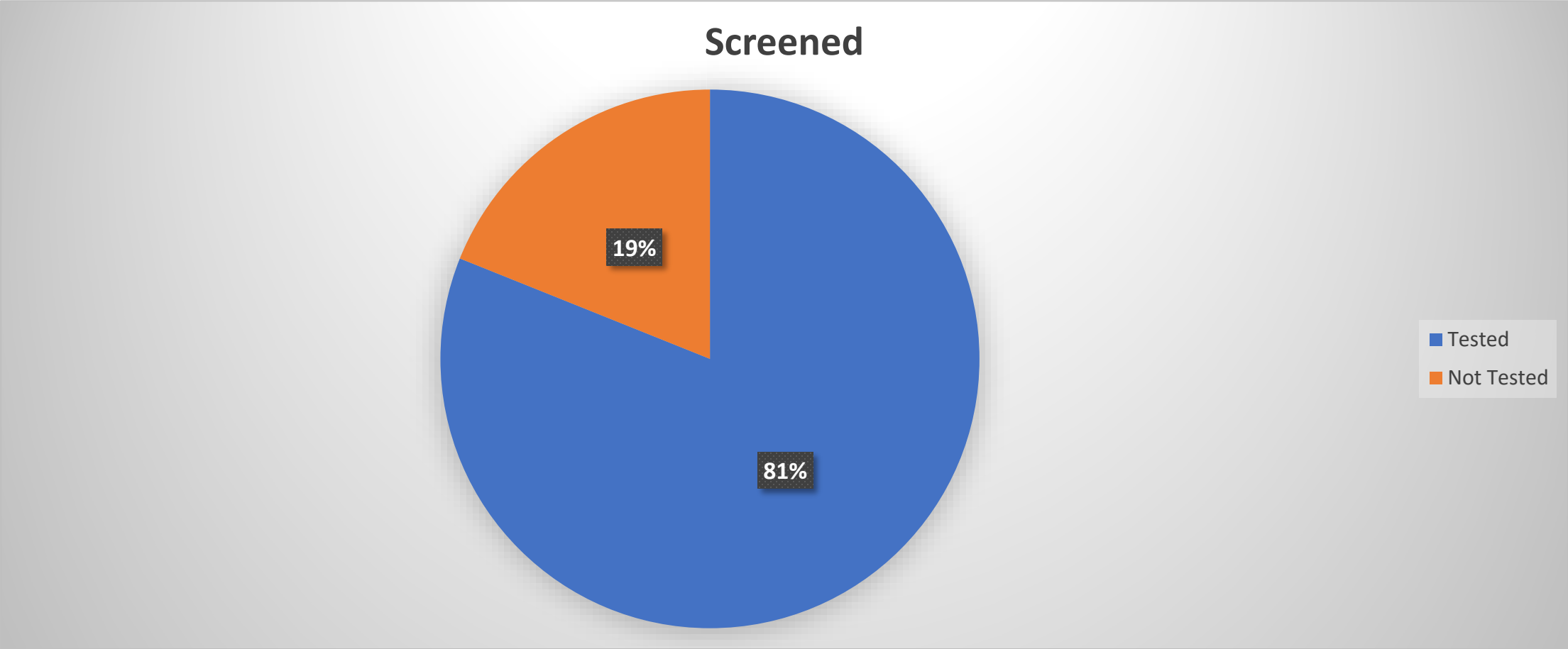
Outreach Services for Rural MSM Populations

Barriers:

- Intense social/cultural stigma

- Further proximity to resources

- Smaller population = smaller local LGBTQ* community = less social capital
Movement Advancement Project: 2.9 – 3.8 LGBTQ people live in rural America, 2019*

- Low health literacy about HIV

- Small evidence base (prevention, intervention) for this population

- Disproportionate burden of poor health outcomes
(CDC: higher mortality rates from heart disease, cancer, stroke, respiratory disease, accidental injury)

- **Fear**

Learning About Real Time Barriers

Fall 2021 Focus Groups

- Focus groups with MSM from rural county (Madison) at LGBTQ* facing HIV testing events
- 33 MSMs participated
  (26 18-22-yrs-old, 7 in mid 20's)
- **"What keeps your friends from getting tested?"**

Fall 2021 focus groups

- 17: Fear of positive test

(one specifically said they thought they'd be "dragged away" by the LHD if positive)

- 4: Positive test is a "death sentence"
- 9: knew what the term undetectable means
- 2: fear of being outed by someone at the event
- 2: did not know where to get tested

Discreet HIV Testing in a Rural Community

*How do you keep an event discreet **AND** let folks know it's happening?*

- Location, location, location!
    - We spent time deciding upon the best possible partner for our event. You need a community partner who supports the work and understands the need for discreetness above all. We partnered with a local microbrewery.
    - *Possible future idea: Could you pay a partner with the right facility to incentivize their support?*
- Pre-event promotion assistance from community champions
    - Known members for the local LGBTQ* community were recruited to assist with outreach to their persona contacts. Through on-going outreach, we successfully recruited 3 MSM who knew the rural area of our event
- Select the best possible staff for your target population
    - Staff who assisted with this event each either had personal or professional experience (in some cases both) relevant to working rural LGBTQ* populations.
- Consider promotion strategy during event
    - We did outreach through various MSM dating/hook-up apps while on-site during the event

Discreet HIV Testing in a Rural Community

*What we did **not** do:*

- No general public promotion prior to the event (i.e. no social media ads, radio promotion, flyers, or other forms of signage)

- We did not post the event on our program's public calendar

- No identifiable HIV/testing signage before or during event

Using the Site to Support Discreet Testing

"Does this site **promote** the discreet nature of the event?"

- Think about opportunities for structural support
- We set-up during a time when the brewery was closed
- One reason we chose the site is that we were completely concealed from the sidewalk/street on all sides

Using the Site to Support Discreet Testing

View from the street

Using the Site to Support Discreet Testing

Actual testing site

Promotion During the Event

Working the dating/hookup apps
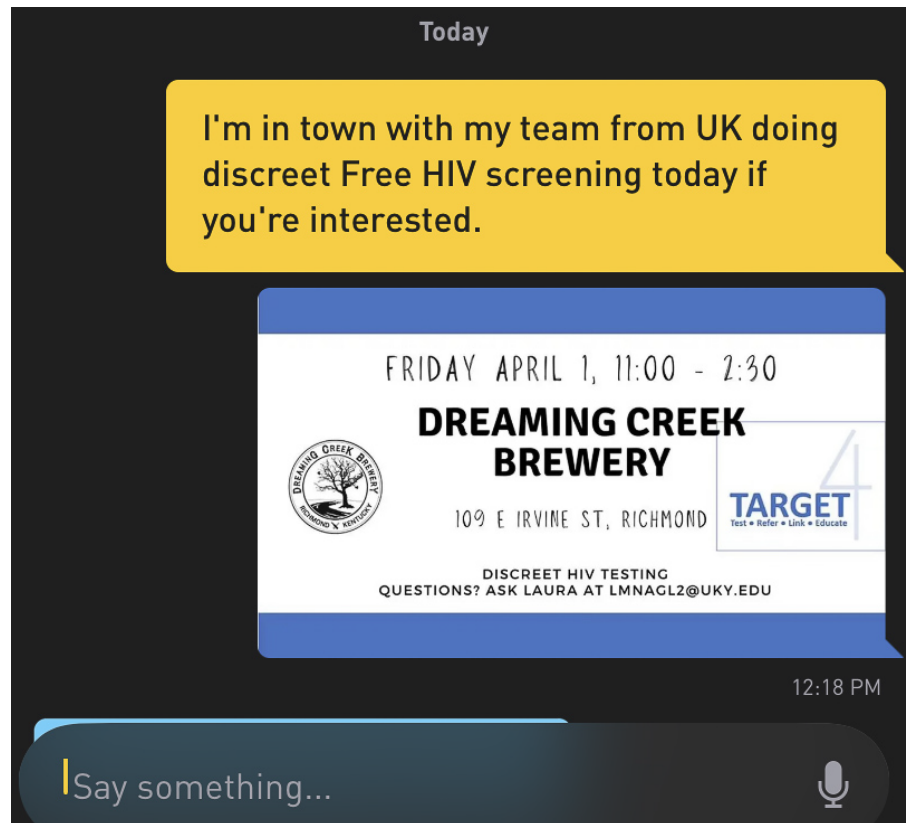
- There are specific strategies to use when targeting potential participants on apps like Grindr & Scruff

Promotion During the Event

Working the dating/hookup apps – choosing who to contact

Working the dating/hookup apps

1. Being discreet is of utmost importance
   a. No signage that even implies HIV related services
   b. The site must be visually discreet – not easily seen by passersby
   c. Preferably, no one working the site is well known to the community
2. Have a member of the MSM community present
3. Word of mouth is your best friend, if you do things right
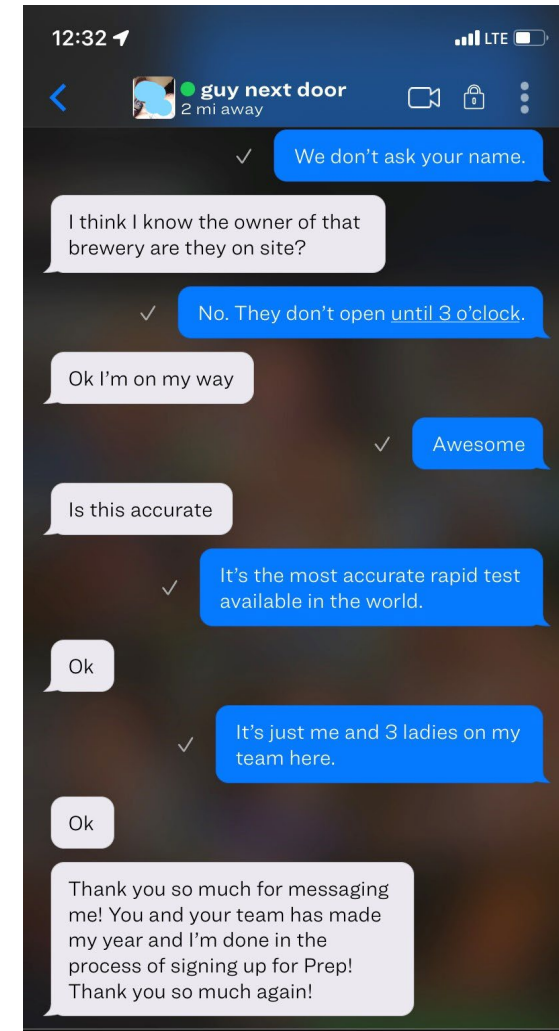
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