

THE VIRGINIA & MARYLAND

Home HIV Testing Program

Testing Model Description:

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) administers a home HIV testing program. Through this program VDH distributes OraQuick® In-Home HIV Test kits, free of charge, to individuals who register with the program by completing an [on-line confidential survey](#), managed through a [REDCap \(Research Electronic Data Capture\)](#) database. The program is currently available to all residents of Virginia and Maryland. Individuals may request test kits at 90-day intervals. VDH administers the home HIV testing program in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health.

Through the survey, VDH gathers information about an individual requesting a test kit (e.g. age, sex at birth, gender, race, ethnicity, insurance status); HIV risk information (e.g. number and gender of sex partners, condom use, drug and alcohol use); HIV testing history; barriers to obtaining an HIV test; and contact information (name, mailing address, email address). The survey is available in both English and Spanish.

Individuals participating in the program receive a follow-up survey 14 days following the date on which kits are shipped. The survey requests that program participants self-disclose HIV test results, as well as any subsequent testing and treatment that the individual received. The survey also solicits client feedback related to their experience using the program.

Recruitment:

Program promotion is primarily through social media. VDH leveraged images and content from previous statewide HIV campaigns. Word of mouth has also been an important mechanism for program promotion.

Program Management:

All aspects of the program are centrally managed by VDH including procurement of supplies, management of the survey data system, verification of client eligibility, kit assembly, kit shipment, and communication with individuals receiving test kits.

Test kits are shipped via US Mail. VDH uses the US Postal Service’s Regional Rate Shipping. Test kits are delivered within three days of order. Test kits include information to support individuals in correctly conducting the test and accessing prevention and treatment resources. Each kit is labeled with OraSure’s Home Testing Hotline, the CDC HIV Hotline, VDH’s Prevention Hotline, as well as local prevention resources. The kit includes condoms, lubricants, and informational resources on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis.



Lessons Learned:

When VDH initially implemented the home HIV testing program, it was a strategy to address barriers to HIV testing, primarily among men who have sex with men. Barriers to testing included stigma, isolation, and prior negative experience with clinic- or agency-based testing for HIV. During the COVID-19 pandemic, VDH built on their experience with the home HIV testing program and is, through parallel efforts, provisioning community-based providers with OraQuick® In-Home HIV Test kits for distribution to clients. VDH emphasizes that in administering a home HIV testing program, it is important to balance home-based testing with traditional in-office or in-clinic testing, which can provide a range of services and supports to individuals. Home HIV testing is a tool to support and encourage individuals who might not otherwise do so, to obtain HIV testing. Maintaining the home HIV testing program requires investment of time and effort of several VDH staff, which has helped the program remain sustainable despite significant expansion. Use of REDCap for the surveys helped to automate follow-up survey efforts, and improved the quality of data needed for program monitoring and evaluation.



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