

Frequently Asked Questions: HIV/AIDS Reporting in New Mexico



WHY IS HIV/AIDS INFECTION REPORTED?

AIDS has been reportable to the HIV & Hepatitis Epidemiology Program (Program) at the New Mexico Department of Health since 1981. HIV infection first became reportable on January 15, 1998. By recording both HIV infections and AIDS diagnoses, we have a better count of people affected by the disease in New Mexico. This information is used to help target prevention programs and to justify and allocate funds for HIV/AIDS services.

WHO SHOULD REPORT HIV/AIDS CASES?

Any medical provider, laboratory, or organization that offers HIV/AIDS testing by name or provides care to HIV/AIDS patients must report. Health care providers who see HIV/AIDS patients should designate a staff person responsible for reporting to the Program. Infection control nurses generally report HIV/AIDS patients admitted to hospitals. At other facilities, case managers may be responsible for reporting cases.

WHAT ARE THE HIV/AIDS CASE DEFINITIONS?

HIV: Confirmed HIV antibody test (screening and confirmatory), or a test for HIV RNA or HIV cDNA ("viral load"), or a test to detect HIV proteins, or a positive HIV culture, or any other test or condition indicative of HIV infection as defined by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

AIDS: Opportunistic infections or cancers indicative of AIDS, or low CD4 lymphocyte count (<200 per ul or <14% of total lymphocytes).

Children born to HIV-infected mothers are reportable whether the child's HIV status is confirmed or not.

HOW DO I REPORT A CASE?

Case report forms are available from our office and on our website. Pediatric case report forms for newborns and children under the age of 13 years are also available. Completed forms may be mailed or faxed; reports can also be called in to the Program:

Attention:
Surveillance Coordinator
Infectious Disease Epidemiology Bureau
New Mexico Department of Health
1190 St. Francis Drive, Suite N1359
Santa Fe, NM 87502
Secure Fax: (505) 476-3544
Phone: (505) 476-3515

Providers should continually update our program on the status of patients, including AIDS defining conditions, deaths, and moves out of state.

WHAT ABOUT DUPLICATE REPORTS?

Please report all cases, even if the patient has been seen by other doctors or was diagnosed or treated in another state. Do not assume a patient has already been reported. The Program will collect information on each case and will follow-up to make sure patients are not double-reported. If you have many cases to report and need assistance, call the Program so that we may facilitate this process.

WHAT ABOUT SECURITY?

The Program protects HIV/AIDS information to the fullest extent of the law. All state HIV/AIDS surveillance programs are required to meet security standards set by the CDC. Only Program staff members have access to the HIV/AIDS database. All employees sign a confidentiality statement, with criminal penalties for breaches. Security measures protect the room and building where the database is kept.

HOW IS THE INFORMATION USED?

Surveillance data are summarized in monthly summaries and annual reports of New Mexico HIV/AIDS statistics. You can receive these by email, fax, or mail, or read them online at our website. The information is used to monitor the epidemic, to plan and design HIV/AIDS services and prevention programs, and to allocate resources. The Program can also provide custom data analysis for specific regions or populations, training on the use of the data, and graphic presentation materials. Allow up to two weeks for special data requests.

WHAT ABOUT HIPAA?

The HIPAA Privacy Rule expressly permits disclosures without individual authorization to public health entities that are authorized by law to collect or receive the information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease. This includes the HIV/AIDS surveillance activities that are conducted by the Program. A variety of strict state and federal laws also protect the privacy of all HIV/AIDS related information.

WHO CAN I CONTACT?

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