Welcome Packet

Pierce County AIDS Foundation (PCAF) prevents HIV infection through education and service, assists persons affected by HIV/AIDS, addresses HIV-related health problems, and combats stigma and discrimination associated with this disease.
If you are in crisis
(thinking about hurting yourself or someone else)
or just need someone to talk to,
call the crisis line.

For Pierce County,
call toll-free at 1-800-576-7764

For Thurston County,
call 1-360-586-2800 or toll free at 1-800-627-2211

For Youth: 360-586-2777
Table of Contents

Welcome.........................................................................................................................................................4
Understanding HIV & AIDS.............................................................................................................................5
Transmission & Prevention.............................................................................................................................6
Talking about your HIV status.........................................................................................................................6
Client Services..................................................................................................................................................8
Prevention and Other Support Services .........................................................................................................9
Places that can help..........................................................................................................................................10
WELCOME!

We are here to support you as a person living with HIV/AIDS. We do this by offering services for housing, insurance, medication, mental health, chemical dependency, transportation, advocacy, and other needs. Your quality of life and well being is important to us. We look forward to working with you!

“I’d say get as much information as you can and just surround yourself with support.”—Terry Liddell, diagnosed 1991

Finding out you have HIV can be one of the scariest times of your life. Many people think they’ll get sick and die. Some believe they will be shut out from their friends and families or will lose their jobs or housing. Some fear they won’t be able to have children, date, get married, or ever have sex again. None of these things are true!

“When I found out my status, I read stories of others who were infected with the virus. It gave me hope to know that HIV wasn’t a death sentence and that I wasn’t the only one with it.”—Lolisa Gibson, diagnosed 2004

Being told you have HIV years ago is very different than being told you are positive today. There is no doubt that the news can still be frightening and overwhelming at first. However, thanks to improvements in treatment and care, this disease is no longer a death sentence!

“You have to be committed to your own treatment…”—Chelsea Gulden, diagnosed 2003

People have all kinds of different responses to having HIV. Whatever you experience, there is no right or wrong way to feel. Finding someone you trust to talk to is important. Remember that millions of people have worked through similar feelings, and you will too!

“My opinion was, ‘Hey you’re alive.’ And when you’re alive, there’s hope. You just got to make the adjustment.”—Alfredo Milan, diagnosed 1995

While daily life has improved greatly, shame, stigma, and discrimination may still be an issue for some. That is why it is important for you to know your rights. It is illegal for companies to fire you, landlords to throw you out, and doctors to refuse to treat you simply because you are HIV+. It is possible to keep a career, start a family, and perhaps most importantly, to have an active sex life!

“I am living proof that life does not end with diagnosis and that we still have the power to determine the quality of our lives.”—Nathan Townsend, diagnosed 1984
Understanding HIV & AIDS

HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, causing weakness or deficiency. The letters HIV stand for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. The immune system is made up of many different types of cells and is the body’s natural defense against illness.

HIV causes deficiency by breaking into immune cells – especially CD4 cells. CD4 cells are important because they direct the immune system’s response to illness and infection. HIV uses these cells to create more HIV, destroying the CD4 cell in the process.

The newly created virus then goes on to infect more immune cells and the process continues. The immune system is unable to function properly with too few CD4 cells. Left untreated HIV can cause AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). AIDS is a late stage of HIV disease.

An AIDS diagnosis requires one of two things:

1. A low CD4 count (less than 200 cells per drop of blood), and/or
2. The presence of an AIDS defining illness (an illness not normally present in healthy persons).

Testing positive for HIV does not mean that you have AIDS or that you are going to get sick soon. However, HIV is still considered a disease even though you might feel well. The word disease may make it seem like you should feel sick, when in fact you can feel well a lot of the time. For this reason, some people don’t think of it as a disease. Instead they say they live with HIV or are HIV-positive.

Treatment for HIV is both effective and widely available. The goal of treatment is to reduce the amount of virus and increase the amount of CD4 cells. Treatment works by reducing the virus’ ability to create more HIV within CD4 cells. This gives your CD4 cells the opportunity to rebound and keep you healthy. Most people with HIV disease, including those who have received an AIDS diagnosis, survive long after their diagnosis.

In Summary

- HIV infects and makes copies of itself within CD4 cells of the immune system
- Over time the immune system loses its ability to fight off illness (Immunodeficiency)
- AIDS may be diagnosed if and when the immune system is severely damaged
- Some people do not have to start medication right away, however, most people will have to start medication at some point to slow down the virus
Transmission & Prevention

HIV is found in blood, semen (including pre-cum), vaginal fluids and breast milk. HIV is most commonly transmitted through:

1. Unprotected sex (oral, vaginal, or anal)
2. Sharing of needles or drug works (cooker, cotton, water, etc.)
3. From an infected mother to her child (during pregnancy, childbirth, or from breastfeeding. New treatment greatly reduces risk of transmission to a child.)

Using a condom correctly for every sex event is highly effective in preventing transmission. New research has also shown that a properly medically managed person may be at reduced risk of transmitting to their sexual partners.

There is no risk during normal social interactions (sharing food or utensils, using the same toilet, or breathing the same air). This is because saliva, sweat, tears, urine and feces are not infectious. Bugs are also unable to transmit the virus.

Talk to your case manager or medical provider if you have questions or concerns about your sexual health or how treatment may reduce transmission.

Talking about your HIV status

Deciding whether, when and how to tell others you are living with HIV is an important part of adjusting to life with HIV. There are many ways that you can prepare yourself. It may be helpful to look at the possible risks and benefits of telling others, known as disclosing.

Disclosing may be difficult because...

- You may get unkind or hurtful reactions
- You may suffer discrimination or rejection
- You may be asked intrusive questions about your health or feelings
- The people you tell may be upset, and so you may need to reassure and support them

Disclosing can be a good idea because...

- You can get love and support to help you deal with things
- You can tell people issues that are important to you
- You don’t have the effort of hiding your status
- Your sexual partners will be able to make informed decisions
One size does not fit all. You may have very different reasons for disclosing to different people in your life. Your disclosure needs to fit the situation and the person. Because no two people are alike, no two responses to your disclosure are likely to be the same. How someone reacts will depend largely on what they know, or think they know, about HIV/AIDS.

It is important to notify sex and needle sharing partners you may have exposed to HIV. It is common to think partners will get angry or reject you. Although this can happen, it often does not. Partners may appreciate being told.

If you feel unable telling people you may have exposed there are trained counselors at the local health department who can help you. This is a free, voluntary, and confidential service where the counselor contacts your partners to ensure they are tested. No information is given to the partner about you. For help talking with your partners about your HIV status, call your local health department’s HIV/STD program:

- Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Partner Services (253) 798-2936
- Thurston County Health Department Partner Services (360) 867-2536

Always remember that deciding to tell someone is YOUR choice. Thinking carefully about your needs, fears, and expectations will help you work out what is right for you. Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- Why do you want this person to know?
- How might they react?
- Can they keep it to themselves?
- When and how will you tell them?

**Will people discriminate against me now that I have HIV?**

People living with HIV have faced stigma and discrimination since the beginning of the epidemic. Like many kinds of injustice, HIV stigma is the result of fear. This fear stems from a lack of knowledge about HIV.

Fortunately there are laws that protect people from discrimination based on the fact they are living with HIV. If you believe you are being discriminated against because of your HIV status, call:

- Tacoma Human Rights Commission at 253-591-5151
- Washington State Human Rights Commission at 1-800-233-3247
Client Services*

Medical Case Management
The medical case manager focuses on the clinical services of primary care by delivering a range of client-centered services. The main goals of medical case management are to ensure a client’s access to medical care and medications.

Chicken Soup Brigade
Provides groceries and meals on a weekly basis. Over the phone consultation with a nutritionist is also available.

Chemical Dependency
Services include assessment and referrals to counseling, support groups, chemical dependency programs, and other resources as needed.

Essential Needs Bank
Hygiene supplies and household products available monthly. Items include shampoo, laundry detergent, safer sex materials (condoms and lube), and much more.

Housing & Rental Assistance
Services include rental assistance, move-in assistance, and utility assistance, as well as referrals to community agencies offering permanent, supportive housing.

Lunch and Learn
Lunch and Learn is a monthly program for clients to have a great lunch, socialize with other clients and participate in educational presentations on a variety of topics.

Mental Health Services
Services include assessment and referrals to counseling, support groups, and other resources as needed.

Medical Transportation
Provides transportation assistance for medical appointments through the use of gas cards and bus tickets.
Prevention and Other Support Services*

Oasis Youth Center (Ages 14-24) www.oasisyouthcenter.org
Oasis is a confidential drop-in resource center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth ages 14-24 in Pierce County.

Mpowerment Oly!
Mpowerment Oly! Is located at the PCAF Olympia office and shares a building with Stonewall Youth. This program is here to build a healthy, active, and engaged community for gay and bisexual men in Olympia!

Mpowerment Tacoma (Ages 25+)
Mpowerment Tacoma is nearly identical to Mpowerment Oly!, but geared specifically to the needs of older gay and bisexual men in Tacoma.

Support Groups
PCAF Tacoma hosts three support groups:
- The women’s group meets at PCAF Tacoma every third Monday of the month from 2:00-3:30 pm.
- The heterosexual group (for men and women) meets at PCAF Tacoma every 2nd & 4th Thursday from 5:30-7:30 pm.
- The Gay Positive men’s group meets at PCAF Tacoma every 2nd Thursday from 1:30 pm-3:00 pm.

PCAF Olympia hosts a support group; time and date to be determined. Please check with your case manager for more information.

Wills Project (PCAF ONLY)
The Wills Clinic offers estate planning and other civil and legal needs. Appointments are scheduled on every 3rd Thursday of the month from 2-4PM at the PCAF Tacoma office. Referrals for legal services for PCAF Olympia clients are available.

Psychiatric Services
Limited psychiatric services by a psychiatric nurse practitioner are available twice monthly at both PCAF Tacoma and Olympia offices by appointment.

*All services are subject to availability and eligibility. Please speak with your case manager for more details.
Places that can help

Information
Washington State HIV/AIDS Hotline – 1-800-272-2437
www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/hiv/default.htm

CDC National STD/AIDS Hotline
English – 1-800-232-4636, 8am-8pm Monday-Friday
Spanish – 1-800-344-7432, 8am-8pm Monday-Friday

Health Care
(King County)
Harborview, Madison Clinic – 206-744-5100
2 West Clinic, 325 Ninth Ave, Seattle, WA 98104

Harborview, Madison Clinic, Federal Way — 206-744-5100; 253-839-3030
32018 23rd Ave S, Federal Way, WA 98003

(Pierce County)
Community Health Care – 253-441-4742
1202 MLK Jr Way, Tacoma, WA 98405

Infections Limited – 253-627-4123
1624 South I St, Suite 405, Tacoma, WA 98405

(Thurston County)
Olympia Infectious Disease Clinic – 360-459-1213
3525 Ensign Rd NE, Suite 02, Olympia, WA 98506

Support Services
Washington Recovery Helpline – 1-866-798-1511
24 hour help for Substance Abuse, Problem Gambling, & Mental Health Support
www.warecoveryhelpline.org

Washington State Human Rights Commission – 1-800-233-3247
711 South Capitol Way, Suite 402, Olympia, WA 98504

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission – Seattle Office – 1-800-669-4000
Federal Office Building, 909 First Avenue, Suite 400, Seattle, WA 98104
(Pierce County)
Tacoma Human Rights Commission – 253-591-5151
City of Tacoma, Human Rights and Human Services Department
747 Market Street, Room 836, Tacoma, WA 98402

Volunteer Legal Services
www.tacomaprobono.org

Rainbow Center – 253-383-2318
2215 Pacific Ave, Tacoma, WA 98402

Crystal Judson Family Justice Center – 253-798-4166
718 Court E, Tacoma, WA 98402

Point Defiance AIDS Project (Needle Exchange) – 253-272-4857
3629 South D Street, Tacoma, WA, 98418

Food Connections – 253-272-8916
1323 l Saint Trans, Tacoma, WA 98405

FISH Food Bank – 253-383-3167
621 Tacoma Avenue South, Suite 202, Tacoma, WA 98402

(Thurston County)
Stonewall Youth – 360-705-2738
www.stonewallyouth.org
P.O. Box 7383, Olympia, WA 98507

Thurston County Food Bank – 360-352-8597
220 Thurston Avenue NE, Olympia WA, 98501

The Community Kitchen – 360-586-6181
604 Devoe Street SE, Olympia, WA 98501

Syringe Exchange Services
522 Franklin Street, Olympia, WA 98501
Open Tuesday and Thursday from 2:00-7:00PM, with HIV testing from 2:00-6:00PM
Syringe Exchange Coordinator – 360-867-2510
24 Hour Information Line – 360-709-3298
Mobile exchange services (Mondays only between 12-4:30PM) – 280-6746