

# How Schools Can Support HIV Testing Among Adolescents

## WHY SCHOOLS?

**1** **SCHOOLS** have direct contact with about

**16.5**  
MILLION  
HIGH SCHOOL  
STUDENTS  
EVERY DAY

during the most critical years of their social, physical, and intellectual development.

**2** **SCHOOLS** play a key role in supporting HIV testing among students and linking them to confidential health services.

**3** **SCHOOLS** support and promote the health and safety of students and help them establish lifelong healthy behaviors.

Getting tested for HIV is an important step toward prevention; however, testing rates among high school students are low. Schools are important partners in supporting HIV testing among adolescents. Because schools reach millions of students in grades 9–12 every day, they are in a unique position to help educate students about HIV and link them to confidential health services that include HIV testing and counseling.

## Why should adolescents get tested for HIV?

Adolescents need to know their HIV status. Early diagnosis helps young people make informed decisions about their health, which leads to better health outcomes.

Although HIV testing rates among adolescents are low, many engage in behaviors that put them at risk for infection. CDC recommends HIV testing for adolescents.<sup>1</sup>

## Many youth in the U.S. are living with HIV...

**1 in 5**

new HIV infections in the U.S. are in people aged 13–24<sup>2</sup>

**More than 80%**

of youth with newly diagnosed infections are gay or bisexual males<sup>3</sup>

## But often do not know their status...

**More than 50%**

of youth with HIV do not know they are infected<sup>4</sup>

**Only 9%**

of high school students have ever been tested for HIV<sup>4</sup>

**MORE INFORMATION**

GYT: Get Yourself Tested Campaign  
[www.cdcnpin.org/stdawareness/GYT.aspx](http://www.cdcnpin.org/stdawareness/GYT.aspx)

CDC's GetTested Locator Tool  
[gettested.cdc.gov](http://gettested.cdc.gov)

CDC Resources on Health Services for Teens  
[www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/healthservices](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/healthservices)

Registries of Evidence-Based Programs for Reducing Youth Risk Behaviors  
[www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/adolescenthealth/registries.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/adolescenthealth/registries.htm)

Students who are **TAUGHT ABOUT HIV IN SCHOOLS** are more likely to be tested for HIV<sup>6</sup>



## Many students engage in behaviors that put them at risk...

**19%**

of sexually active high school students used alcohol or drugs before they last had sex<sup>5</sup>

**46%**

of sexually active high school students did not use a condom the last time they had sex<sup>5</sup>



## How can schools encourage students to get tested for HIV?

### 1 Access and use health risk behavior data.

- Access Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data on national, state, and local trends in HIV testing and health risk behaviors among high school students.
- Use surveillance data to create programs, policies, and practices.

### 2 Teach students about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

- Educate students about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, to support their likelihood of being tested.
- Enhance HIV prevention curricula by including information on locations and procedures for obtaining free or low-cost confidential testing.

### 3 Connect students with health services that include HIV testing and counseling.

- Increase awareness of student sexual health needs by providing medically accurate information to district and school staff, community partners, and parents.
- Raise student awareness of the need for and availability of health services.
- Establish a referral system that helps link students to youth-friendly providers.

### 4 Encourage students and their parents to talk about HIV.

- Provide parents with information and skills they need to support healthy attitudes, behaviors, and environments.
- Help parents identify unique opportunities to have conversations with their students.

#### Selected References

- <sup>1</sup> CDC. Revised recommendations for HIV testing of adults, adolescents, and pregnant women in health-care settings. *MMWR* 2006;55(RR-14):1-24.
- <sup>2</sup> CDC. Diagnoses of HIV infection among adolescents and young adults in the United States and 6 dependent areas, 2011–2016. *HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report* 2018;23(3).
- <sup>3</sup> CDC. Diagnoses of HIV infection in the United States and dependent areas, 2016. *HIV Surveillance Report* 2016;28.
- <sup>4</sup> CDC. Vital Signs: HIV infection, testing, and risk behaviors among youths—United States. *MMWR* 2012;61(47):971-6.
- <sup>5</sup> CDC. Kann L, McManus T, Harris WA, et al. Youth risk behavior surveillance—United States, 2017. *MMWR Surveillance Summary* 2018;67(8):1-114.
- <sup>6</sup> CDC. HIV testing among high school students—United States, 2007. *MMWR* 2009;58(24):665-8.