

Marketing for HIV Self-Testing Programs at Health Departments and Community-Based Organizations: Promising Practices and Models

Why do we have to market our HIV self-testing program?

HIV self-testing (HIVST) is a relatively new concept for many individuals; however, it is being increasingly used because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for an innovative method of testing. Marketing the concept of HIVST and your HIVST program is a pivotal step to inform your community about HIVST and your agency's new testing method.

Where can my agency market our HIV self-testing program?

Advertising for your HIVST program can happen on social media, websites, dating apps, bus stops, flyers, radio stations, and more. Videos, especially live videos such as Facebook Live, are useful for explaining what HIVST is, what the test and packaging look like, demonstrating how to use the test, and what to do after testing. Live videos also allow for immediate questions and discussion between the community and your agency's staff.

How much does marketing cost?

The cost of marketing varies by platform, duration of campaign, geographic location, how many people you are trying to reach, and what type of ad (e.g., video or picture). Be sure to look for or request a non-profit agency discount, as many platforms tend to offer them. Marketing on your agency's personal social media accounts is a free option, while marketing on platforms such as Grindr, Jack'd, SCRUFF, and Snapchat can cost up to thousands of dollars.

What should our messaging be?

If HIVST is new to your community, it may be helpful to first use messaging about what HIVST is before spreading the message to get tested using HIVST. It is important to speak with your program's priority populations about what messaging and images would resonate most with them.

What are my peers doing to market their HIV self-testing program?*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- The CDC created a [video](#) to inform the community about rapid HIV self-testing.¹

Health Department (HD)

Virginia Department of Health (VDH)²

- There are two HIVST programs at VDH. The core program is a central distribution program out of the state HD. The second program is a CBO-distribution model where the CBOs request rapid HIV self-tests from the state HD and are responsible for follow-up.
- The program is marketed on VDH's website, social media, such as Facebook and Reddit, dating apps, and Pandora radio. They found that marketing on Reddit was effective in reaching transgender women in Virginia.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

Care Resource³

- Care Resource is a CBO in Florida.
- The HIVST program is marketed on social media, flyers, and partner agencies' websites.
- Staff use Facebook Live to demonstrate what the test and packaging look like, how to use the test, and important information about receiving the test results and how to access services based on the result.
- Staff calls current clients due for testing to provide them with the option of HIVST.

Equitas Health⁴

- Equitas Health is a CBO in Ohio. Its HIVST program name is *Test at Home with OHIV*.
- The program is marketed on all major social media platforms, dating apps, printed public bus ads, audio commercials on public buses, and the local radio. Marketing materials were developed with the input of a community focus group. From the community focus group, they learned to have representation of diverse individuals, use vibrant colors, and not to have risqué photos on their marketing materials.

Health Facility

Denver Health⁵

- The program created a community needs assessment to evaluate their community's response to different marketing strategies. The community needs assessment was distributed through Instagram stories and a Google form questionnaire. The assessment asked questions about advertisement preferences, such as videos versus blog posts and live videos versus Instagram TV (IGTV) and evaluated demographics and sexual health education. The assessment found that on Instagram, the community prefers stories, blogs, reels, and IGTV videos rather than picture posts. They were also more engaged with a post or story on Instagram if it contained polls or open-ended questions.
- The program is marketed heavily through social media, as well as via posters and business cards with QR codes.

*Program descriptions are from May-July 2020.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VheITAWTYko>
2. [Free HIV Testing at Walgreens Locations in Virginia! - Greater Than AIDS](#)
3. <https://careresource.org/hometesting/>
4. <https://ohiv.org/free-test-kit>
5. <https://testyourselfcolorado.com/>