

Engaging Community in the Mpox Response

“One of our keys to success was our very close relationship with the NYC Dept. of Health. We created a text chain with the Dept. of Health, other FQHCs and Chief Nursing Officers. This was incredibly helpful as we learned from each other to manage changes and increase access to vaccines and treatments.”

Anthony Fortenberry, Chief Nursing Officer, Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Engage key decision makers early on and often – this includes partners at your local health department and the Disease Investigation Specialists in your community as well as large academic, specialty and hospital care networks.
- The focus should be on building long-term relationships and breaking down barriers. Consider processes and infrastructure that can be leveraged for future public health crises.

PATIENT AND STAFF EDUCATION

Offer facts:

Protect health center patients and staff from exposure with non-stigmatizing communication tools, like a text message, digital signage, and signage in the clinic to explain how the mpox virus spreads.

Minimize stigma:

Offer clear information in public places to decrease stigma around mpox in the health center.

MPOX: GET THE FACTS

MPOX IS SPREAD THROUGH:

- Direct contact with a rash, scabs, or body fluids
- Respiratory secretions during prolonged, face-to-face (unmasked) contact, or during intimate physical contact, such as kissing, cuddling, or sex
- Touching porous items (such as clothing or linens) that previously touched the infectious rash or body fluids

MPOX IS **NOT** SPREAD THROUGH:

- Brief conversations/interactions
- Brushing by someone with mpox
- Touching items like doorknobs or elevator buttons

MPOX: GET THE FACTS

HELP REDUCE THE STIGMA OF MPOX:

- Anyone can get mpox, regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Have open conversations with sexual partners about your status, and theirs. Lead with empathy! We are all in this together. Do not blame or shame anyone—including yourself.
- Don't panic, and seek medical attention if you have a new or unexplained rash. You can get tested, and find ways to keep you, your partners, and other close contacts safe.

ACTION STEPS FOR A STRONG HEALTH CENTER MPOX RESPONSE

- **Ensure access to PPE:** Share resources with staff and care teams to explain clinical risk features and diagnosis, and when to use additional PPE (gowns, eye protection, masks, gloves).
- **Document activities in EHRs:** Ensure the electronic health record (EHR) can accommodate work around mpox diagnosis, treatment, and vaccination services.
- **Reduce administrative burden:** Create infrastructure around access to TPOXX. This starts with a strong relationship with the local department of health.
- **Prepare talking points:** Administrative staff can be trained to answer questions and conduct outreach about the vaccine. Create talking points (especially on intradermal injections). Create FAQs for patients in many languages. Inform patients they must return 4 weeks later for the second dose for full benefit. Help schedule return visits.
- **Outreach with equity:** Conduct vaccine outreach with a health equity lens – in multiple languages. Create a plan to improve access for African American, Latino/a, and Native populations. Trusted community organizations can amplify outreach and patient care.
- **Include mpox with HIV and STI triage, treatment, and care:** Talk with patients about the mpox vaccine when you talk with them about PrEP, HIV care and other STIs. Mpox is a differential diagnosis. Leverage existing HIV systems and funds for this virus.
- **Convey empathy:** Stigma runs deep for patients. They often feel they are at fault so it's important to help them feel cared-for and not judged.
- **Funding for mpox (mpox):** Seek funds through **Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Ryan White funds** as well as Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Housing and Urban Development programmatic funds for mpox as part of HIV and STI care.

NACHC'S EFFORTS TO SUPPORT HEALTH CENTERS

- Advocates to reduce barriers to test kits and therapeutics and create evidence-driven mpox training tools for health center staff and patients.
- Works closely with the Infectious Diseases Society of America, HRSA, the CDC, the National Coalition of STD Directors (NCSD), the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the White House, NACHC's LGBTQ+ Task Force, and advocacy stakeholders on the mpox response.
- Signs letters to Congress to support President Biden's request to fund the health center response.
- Created an mpox web page with resources for health centers.
- Offers webinars, such as this one: Emerging best practices for mpox in Community Health Primary Care, 11/3/22.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ASTHO: Helping health centers build relationships with local health departments
- Housing and homeless assistance services: Leverage services allowable under the Ryan White program, like Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS.
- HRSA: HAB mpox Information with mpox FAQs
- National Coalition of NCSD
- National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers (NNSTC): Assistance with training