Jails and Prisons Miss Chances to Test for HIV, Link to Care

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The nation's correctional systems are missing vital opportunities to both test inmates for HIV and to link those living with the virus to care upon re-entry into society. Publishing their findings in Health Affairs, researchers polled medical directors from 50 state prison systems and 40 of the country's largest jails.

Just 19 percent of prison systems and 35 percent of jails, the researchers found, offer opt-out HIV testing, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Less than a fifth of prisons and jails adhere to CDC guidelines for linking inmates into care upon release, including making an appointment with a community health provider, helping the inmate obtain health coverage and providing medical records and a supply of antiretrovirals.

Obamacare's expansion of Medicaid may incentivize testing and linkage to care for state correctional facilities, the report states.

The report recommends that discharge services for HIV-positive inmates also include referrals to substance abuse treatment and mental health treatment.

"By ensuring that individuals get the care they need while incarcerated and helping them remain in care once released, we will ensure that some of most vulnerable people will avoid a life-threatening illness and help meet the national goal of reducing health disparities," Liza Solomon, DrPH, the study's lead author and a principal associate with Abt Associates, said in a release.

To read the press release, click here.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/prison-linkage-testing-25417-2463