



# Tips for Providers on Preventing HIV Stigma and Discrimination

How to provide inclusive, non-discriminatory care for patients living with HIV.

January 21, 2026 By [Tim Murphy](#)

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## GET EDUCATED

If your practice lacks experience in treating patients with HIV or is unsure which actions are illegal under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), consider reaching out to your local health department or HIV services organization (search for one by using the [POZ Directory](#)) to see whether someone can provide an up-to-date training. You can also get guidance from reliable online resources, such as [AAHIVM.org](#), [HIVMAivma.org](#) and [AIDSETC.org](#). Sometimes, the difference between making patients living with HIV feel marginalized or genuinely welcomed is simply a matter of education.

## SIGNAL YOUR HIV SAVVY IN YOUR OFFICE

You can let patients living with HIV know that your practice is safe and welcoming from the moment they walk in. Display posters or brochures in the waiting room with basic HIV info (POZ offers [free HIV posters](#) to health care providers; you can also check with your local HIV services organization or health department). You could also include POZ magazine among your copies of People and Real Simple. ([Click here](#) to order a free bulk subscription.) Even posting signs with statements such as “All are welcome here!” or “We serve everyone!” can set new patients at ease. Keep in mind, says Daskalakis, that people are thinking: “Am I going to be a Martian here, or can I see myself in this practice?”

Additionally, if your intake form asks patients whether they have HIV, you can update it to also ask for their last CD4 count and viral load. That signals that you know the importance of both.

## PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES

If a patient calls out your practice, whether it’s for something like “I heard your receptionists whispering and snickering about my HIV status” or “Would you mind referring to me as a ‘person living with HIV’ instead of ‘infected with HIV’?”, try not to get defensive. Instead think about how difficult the experience must be for them, including how much courage it took just to mention the remark or behavior.

## TAKE YOUR PATIENTS' CONCERNS SERIOUSLY

If a patient is worried about certain conditions and asks about preventive care—such as cervical or anal precancer screening or tests for sexually transmitted infections—don't dismiss them out of hand. Make a note and do some follow-up research. Health guidance is constantly evolving, and you may not be up to date on the latest recommendations. A good place to start is the American Academy of HIV Medicine's [treatment guidelines](#).

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