



Outcomes from Recent Herpes Simplex Virus Virtual Listening Sessions

HSV can increase the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV, creating a syndemic between HIV and HSV.

June 2, 2023 By [HIV.gov](https://www.hiv.gov)

Earlier this year, the HHS Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP) convened [two listening sessions](#) with provider and community audiences as OIDP develops an addendum to the [STI National Strategic Plan](#) (STI Plan) to include herpes simplex virus (HSV) types 1 and 2 in the U.S.

The new HSV addendum will identify and establish national action items to address gaps in HSV research, as well as existing policy and programmatic efforts in the U.S. These listening sessions provided OIDP and HHS leadership an opportunity to learn about the ways the HSV addendum can support the work of providers, as well as an opportunity to listen and learn from the community to center their needs in the HSV addendum.

STI National Strategic Plan and HSV

The STI Plan provides a roadmap toward a nation where STIs are prevented and where every person has high-quality STI prevention, care, and treatment while living free from stigma and discrimination.

The current STI Plan focuses primarily on nationally notifiable STIs in the U.S. This means healthcare providers and/or laboratories in all 50 states are required by state law to report the diagnosis or the positive lab test to their state or local health departments.

Although STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis are considered notifiable diseases, HSV types 1 and 2 are not, despite being one of the nation's most prevalent STIs. Additionally, an HSV diagnosis is often socially stigmatized, which can cause psychological impact for those with the virus. HSV can also increase the risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV, creating a syndemic between HIV and HSV.

Dr. Timothy Harrison, OIDP Principal Deputy Director, provided opening remarks at both sessions, followed by remarks by Dr. Leandro Mena, Director, CDC Division of STD Prevention and Dr. Carolyn Deal, Chief, NIH Enteric and Sexually Transmitted Infections Branch. These speakers discussed their agencies' respective roles in addressing HSV and how their efforts align with the

goals and objectives of the STI Plan.

Community Feedback on HSV

A diverse group of community and provider participants from across the U.S. attended both listening sessions, representing advocacy organizations, community organizations, research institutions, national, state, local, and tribal health departments. Participants shared their knowledge and personal experiences with HSV, as well as recommendations for the HSV addendum.

Major themes that emerged during both sessions included:

- Lack of Adequate Public Health Responses to HSV
- Barriers to Testing and Surveillance
- Lack of Provider Knowledge and Resources for People with HSV
- Vaccines, Treatment, and Care
- Stigma
- Awareness and Education
- Research

OIDP continues to seek future opportunities to receive public input for the HSV addendum, which included a listening session held last week at the National Coalition of STD Directors [STD Engage: 2023](#) Conference in New Orleans. We will share more about this in the future.

[This blog post](#) was originally published May 25, 2023, by HIV.gov. It is republished with permission.