



## National HIV Prevention Conference

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### **[TITLE:] CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSE TO MOBILE HIV RAPID TESTING**

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**ISSUE:** Mobile rapid testing has improved community access to HIV testing. Nearly all who are tested in high-risk areas and hard-to reach populations receive their results. Yet, hard-to-reach groups often view the presence of a testing van in their community as highly suspect. Although additional efforts to conduct outreach in these communities are necessary, the same method of outreach may not be effective with every population.

**SETTING:** HIV Rapid Testing using mobile outreach occurs in high-risk settings in Washington, D.C., Suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia in areas where known cruising, free and commercial sex activity is high, and drug trafficking and use is prevalent.

**PROJECT:** This project provides Rapid Testing to African Americans and Latinos 16 years and older. Two mobile vans are deployed in order to canvas high-risk locations providing appropriate referrals to prevention services including medical care for those clients testing positive. The vans facilitate cultural specificity with staff (inclusive of outreach workers) indigenous to the target populations (Latino (a) or African American.) Although many sites are chosen based on prior experience, staff also interview community members to assess the site's appropriateness before deploying mobile units. By going to the target population, geographic, logistical, and social barriers that have traditionally existed in clinical settings is greatly reduced.

**RESULTS:** A total of 744 persons consisting of African Americans and Latinos were tested. Sites were classified as either African American or Latino based on the predominant race/ethnicity at the site. Thirteen sites were classified as African American and 20 as Latino (a). At Latino sites where 463 persons received HIV tests, 89% (413) required some type of outreach intervention to get tested. At African American sites

where 281 persons received HIV tests, about 50% (142) of those tested required outreach to get tested. The average acceptance rate was higher among Latinos 65% versus 48% among African Americans.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** Although mobile rapid HIV testing improves target populations accessibility to testing, there are differences in the way services are accessed between African Americans and Latinos. African Americans are more likely to access services on their own when social and logistical barriers are eliminated and mobile van testing is available, but is more likely to refuse testing on the whole. Latinos are more likely to accept testing, but less likely to be tested without some form of outreach and education on testing benefits. In each scenario the primary lesson learned is that outreach is effective and necessary. However, different approaches may be required in order to reach different populations.



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