

Strategic Considerations for Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Key-Population-Focused HIV Programs

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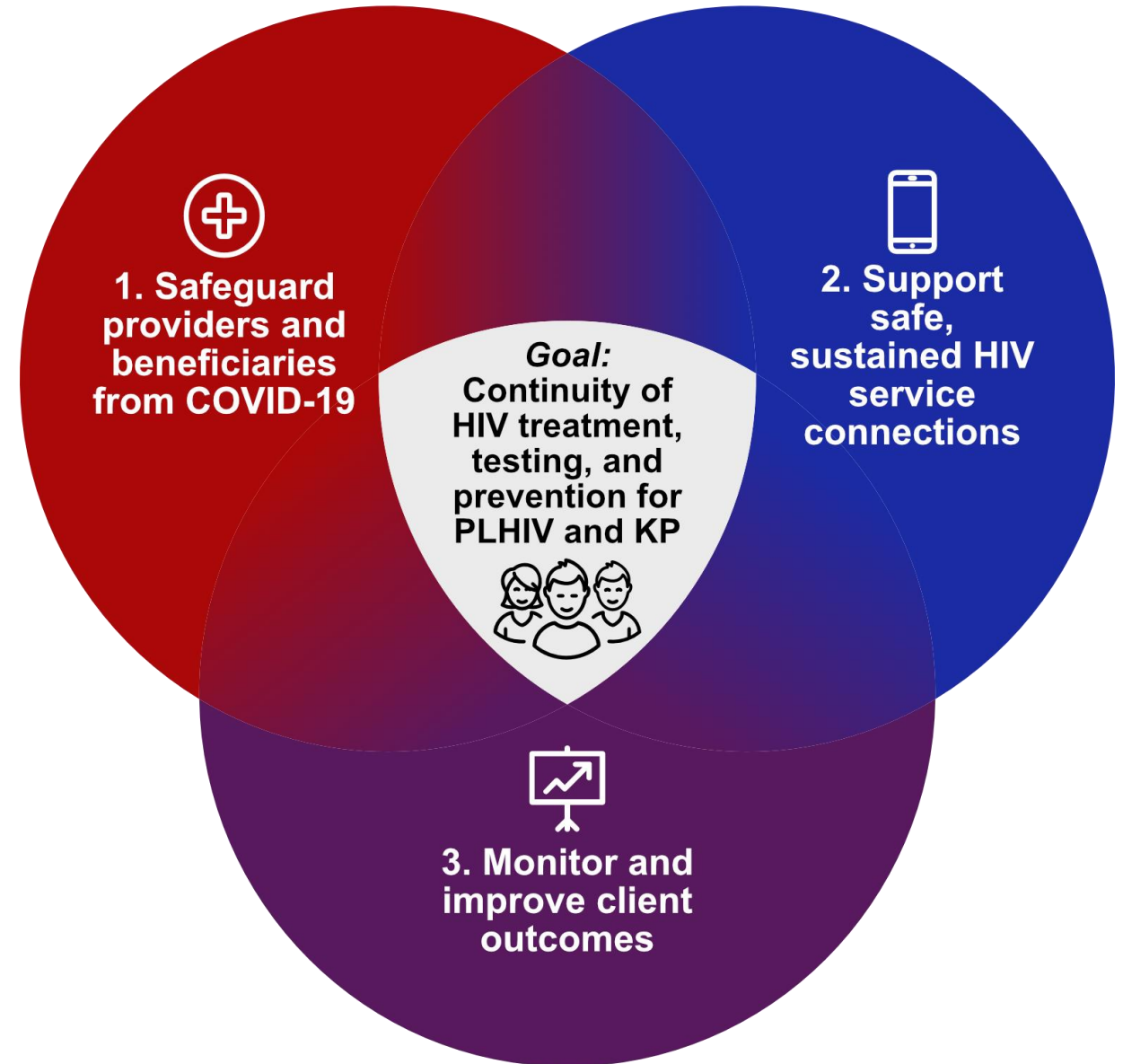
Background

With USAID and PEPFAR support, the global Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) Project compiled technical resources to help HIV programs mitigate the impact of COVID-19

All of these resources reflect a core strategy with elements focused on:

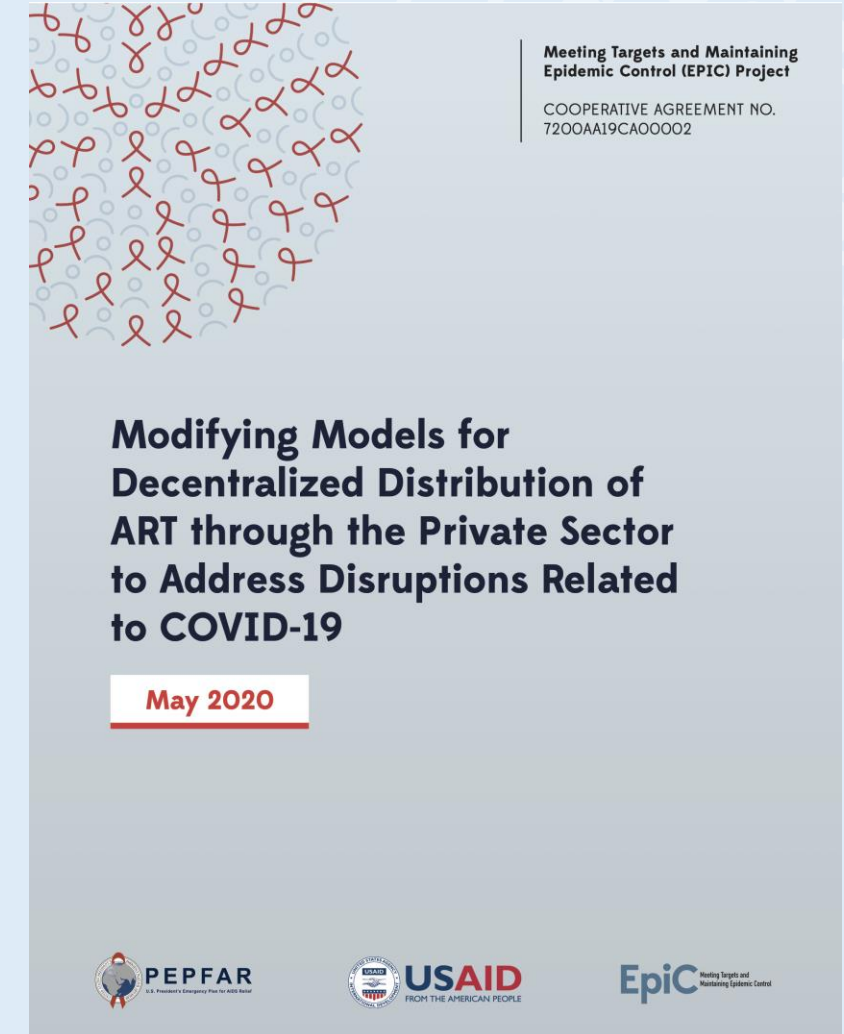
- Safeguarding;
- Sustaining safe connections; and
- Monitoring and improving outcomes

Elements of a differentiated, client-centered approach
to mitigating the impacts of
COVID-19 on HIV program beneficiaries, providers, and outcomes



Key elements of a strategic response

- Decentralizing services to limit COVID-19 exposure in facilities
- Multi-month dispensing of ART and PrEP
- “Going online”
- Navigation support
- Self-led services, including HIV self-testing



Safeguarding community and clinical services

- Virtual training and capacity building
- Protecting providers
- Moving engagement and case management online
- Hotline and virtual navigation
- Delivering commodities
- Tracking progress and pitfalls

Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC) Project

May | 2020

Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on HIV Programs: Practical Considerations for Community-Based Providers




May 8, 2020

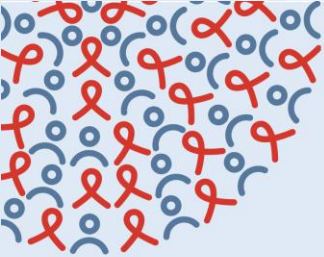
COVID-19 is a global pandemic with currently more than 3 million people infected and over 250,000 deaths. Many HIV programs funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) are trying to develop mitigation plans to ensure that essential services are still available for people living with HIV (PLHIV) while prioritizing the safety of staff and beneficiaries and reducing their risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission.

HIV service delivery has become more challenging during the pandemic because of social distancing, which restricts large group gatherings; reduced demand for services because community members are fearful of COVID-19 transmission in facilities; and reduced availability of services when providers are assisting with the pandemic response. The lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) also reduces confidence among beneficiaries and service providers because both feel exposed and vulnerable to transmission and acquisition of COVID-19. Therefore, within this context, PEPFAR's priority is the safety and security of staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries. In response, programmatic measures must be put in place to ensure that protection. PEPFAR's second priority is maintaining essential HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services; viral load (VL) testing; and treatment of opportunistic infections to safeguard and prolong lives.

This document, *Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on HIV Programs: Practical Considerations for Community-Based Providers*, is linked to the broader [EpiC Strategic Considerations for Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Key-Population-Focused HIV Programs](#). The latter describes the measures that key-population-focused HIV programs should strive to implement at all service delivery levels to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. This community-based document focuses on community HIV services that serve a full range of populations, including adolescent girls and young women, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), at-risk men, and key populations. The community-based services discussed here might also provide information, commodities, and services related to family planning, tuberculosis, prevention of mother-to-child transmission, voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC), and safe drug-injecting equipment for people who use drugs.

Community-based HIV programs often involve well-trained and supported peers, who share attributes such as gender, sexual orientation, age, health condition, or socioeconomic status with populations the programs are trying to reach. Peer-led interventions have become a standard approach in many programs working with key populations, priority populations, and others who are considered hard to reach. Peers play a critical role in linking beneficiaries to HIV services and

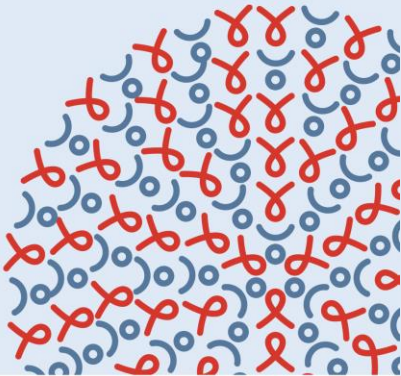





MEETING TARGETS AND MAINTAINING EPIDEMIC CONTROL (EPIC) PROJECT

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT NO. 7200AA19CA00002

Ensuring uninterrupted essential HIV treatment services to clients during the COVID-19 pandemic

MAY 2020



Messaging Guidance for Key-Population-Focused HIV Programs to Mitigate the Impact of COVID-19

April 6, 2020

This COVID-19 and HIV messaging guidance is intended to support HIV programs in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and safely maintaining HIV outreach and service delivery. It was written for FHI 360-supported HIV programs focusing on key populations (KPs) but may also be useful for general HIV programs. This document will help ensure that program implementers are providing correct and consistent information about coronavirus and COVID-19 to HIV program beneficiaries, staff, and clinical partners (based on currently available information). The document includes four sets of messages prioritized for specific audiences. Some messages should be shared across audiences. Programs using these messages should adapt the messages to be consistent with those of the local health authority and should link to existing resources in relevant languages. Include program- or country-specific information and resources wherever you see red text in the messages.

Intended Audiences



All Audiences

- [About COVID-19 and prevention](#)
- [COVID-19 clinical care](#)
- [Tips for living in a pandemic](#)
- [COVID-19 myths](#)



People living with HIV (PLHIV)

- [COVID-19 and PLHIV](#)
- [HIV service access for PLHIV](#)



Key Populations

- [Sex and COVID-19](#)
- [Sex work and COVID-19](#)
- [Drug use and COVID-19](#)
- [Maintaining HIV service access](#)



Community and Health Staff

- [Community-based facility staff](#)
- [Outreach \(and mobile\) staff](#)
- [Providing support online](#)
- [Client well-being](#)
- [Staff well-being](#)

EpiC is a global cooperative agreement dedicated to achieving and maintaining HIV epidemic control. It is led by FHI 360 with core partners Right to Care, Palladium International, Population Services International (PSI), and Gobe Group.

Messaging guidance

- Driven by concerns that uncertainties about COVID-19 risks would constrain access to and provision of essential HIV services
- Focus on minimizing COVID-19 and HIV risks among providers and prospective clients
- Strategies to “safely sustain” HIV prevention, care, and treatment in the face of COVID-19
- Updated regularly to reflect and link to new data



Thank you!

<https://www.fhi360.org/resource/meeting-targets-and-maintaining-epidemic-control-epic-covid-19-and-hiv-technical-resources>



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