

# EARLY PHASE IMPLEMENTATION OF ROUTINE OPT OUT HEPATITIS C TESTING IN THE PHILADELPHIA JAIL SYSTEM

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Hepatitis C (HCV) infection disproportionately affects those in United States correctional institutions with seroprevalence rates up to 23.1% in some facilities.

Jails have represented a particularly challenging setting for HCV testing and treatment given the short duration of stay and uncertainty of the timing of release.

Despite recommendations that all incarcerated persons undergo HCV testing, screening is not universally performed.

# Philadelphia FIGHT partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Prisons and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health

~25,000 admissions to the Philadelphia jail system per year

Philadelphia FIGHT works closely with the jail to ensure testing is offered to all individuals at intake

- We have been providing HIV linkage to care within the jail for many years, and we built upon this model to expand services for those living with HCV.
- Tests are provided by the jail. Results are shared with FIGHT each week so a prison linkage specialist can visit with the patient and a data manager can ensure that all protocols are running smoothly

We work closely with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health HCV Surveillance team to increase result delivery for those released before results are returned to PDP, linkage to care and continuity of care

# HCV Testing

## Philadelphia Department of Prisons 2018-2019

### January 2018- March 2018

**No** individuals were tested. HCV education was provided to jail medical staff, contracts between the City of Philadelphia and Philadelphia FIGHT were finalized, and a FIGHT Linkage Specialist was hired. Inclusion criteria were developed and testing protocols were modified to meet the needs and concerns of the jail

### April 2018

Individuals were eligible for testing six **weeks** prior to release and were tested by jail medical staff in the presence of a FIGHT linkage specialist

### May 2018 – July 2018

Individuals were eligible for testing six **months** prior to release and were tested by jail medical staff in the presence of a FIGHT linkage specialist

### August 2018 – September 2018

**All** sentenced individuals were eligible for testing in the presence of a FIGHT linkage specialist

### October 2018 – August 2019

All sentenced individuals were eligible for testing **without** the presence of a FIGHT linkage specialist

# HCV Testing

## Philadelphia Department of Prisons 2019-2020

**September 2019- present**

All individuals are offered HCV testing at intake by the jail staff as part of the routine intake exam which is typically offered within 72 hours of arriving at the Philadelphia jail.

Infectious Disease specialists embedded within the jail deliver results to patients living with chronic HCV and begin follow-up lab work immediately after result delivery.

Fibroscans are performed weekly by Philadelphia FIGHT technicians.

Patients with advanced liver disease who are expected to be incarcerated for at least 12 weeks are treated onsite. Those with healthier livers and those expected to be incarcerated for a shorter time are referred to Philadelphia FIGHT HCV Linkage Specialists and/or given printed information directing them to Philadelphia FIGHT after release.

Philadelphia FIGHT HCV Linkage Specialists meet with patients at least once after diagnosis to gather information for linkage to care after release and to provide one on one education and counseling sessions

# HCV Testing

## Philadelphia Department of Prisons 2019-2020

### **March 2020 – present**

### **COVID-era HCV Service Provision in the Philadelphia jail**

All individuals are offered HCV testing at intake as part of the routine intake exam which is typically offered within 72 hours of arriving at the jail. As of Spring 2020, all those undergoing intake examination are screened for COVID 19 and subject to a quarantine period.

Infectious Disease specialists embedded within the jail deliver results to patients living with chronic HCV and begin follow-up lab work when the patient leaves quarantine

Treatment guidelines and protocols are followed with additional precautions in place.

**Philadelphia FIGHT HCV Linkage Specialists still aim to meet with patients at least once after diagnosis to gather information for linkage to care after release and to provide one on one education and counseling sessions. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible due to quarantine, lockdown, or other factor, a packet of information including a letter describing FIGHT services and contacts is sent to the patient. Some patients have arranged for a telephone meeting with the Linkage Specialist via their jail social workers**

# HCV Testing at the Philadelphia jail: 9/1/2019- 8/31/2021

**21010** inmates have been tested since September 2019

**2390 (11.38%)** antibody positive

**2273 (95.10%** of those ab+) reflexive RNA tests were performed\*

**1574 (69.25%** of those ab+ tested, **7.49%** of all those screened at the PDP) RNA positive

**1047** linked to care within the jail\*\*

**754** met with a Philadelphia FIGHT Linkage Specialist

**412** started HCV medication within the jail since September 2019

\*Reflexive RNA testing upon intake is crucial! You must work with the EMR team to ensure this is happening as part of the routinized workflow

\*\*Linked to care is defined as at least one appointment with an HCV subspecialist provider within the jail

## What to expect after release from the Philadelphia jail

FIGHT HCV Care Coordination team reaches out to patient using contact information provided at the linkage visit and to the jail upon release

- Philadelphia FIGHT has a 24hour “warm line” for patients to call to speak to us
- Philadelphia Department of Public Health has a “results line” for those who didn’t receive their results in jail.
- HCV appointments are scheduled at Philadelphia FIGHT within 72 hours of contacting a patient
- Re-entry services are available to all those returning home from jail



## Challenges of testing and linkage in the jails

Before testing upon intake was implemented, calling inmates down to medical once they are sentenced was a timely and unwieldy process

Since testing upon intake has been implemented, our greatest challenge is delivering results to those who are released before their results are returned from the reference lab.

Tests are performed by an outside agency and a lab that is new to us and we have little control over provider's lab order preferences

Data is recorded, housed, and disseminated from an outside agency

# HCV testing and linkage successes

- Over 90% of individuals undergo an intake exam and an HCV test is part of that exam
- Integration of jail medical staff workflow standards and protocols so all patients undergo the gold-standard of care and FIGHT staff can focus on linkage
- Linkage to care visits are streamlined and best practices are developed according to current needs
- Jail providers, peers, and lab staff are key in encouraging those who are known to be positive to accept linkage
- Recidivism rates within the PDP are ~40%. Folks who leave before treatment is initiated or completed are seen again upon re-entry and many of those who are lost to care or hard to contact are located within the PDP.

For more  
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- Routine opt out HCV screening in a jail setting ensures widespread testing to a traditionally underserved population.
- Collaboration between health care providers in the correctional system and health care providers in the community is necessary to coordinate HCV services in a high volume, high turnover urban jail.

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