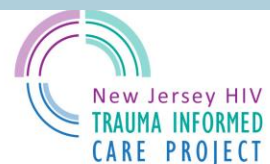


Trauma Informed Retention Strategies

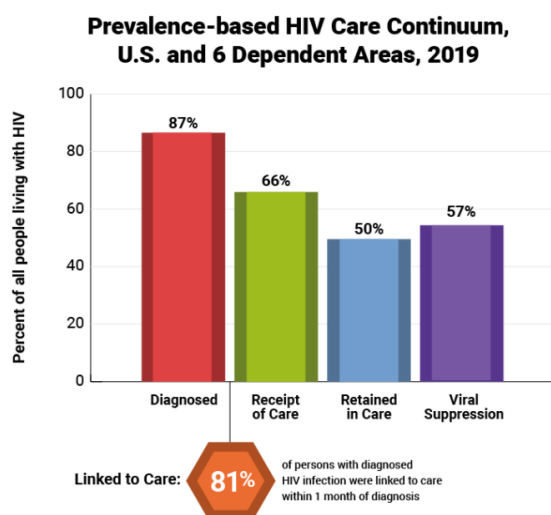
Linking and retaining clients in healthcare services, particularly in the first year after diagnosis, is crucial for people with HIV to reach viral suppression and live longer, healthier lives. It is important that staff use their trauma informed skills to engage and stay connected with clients to support them in keeping appointments and overcoming barriers to care.

Below are nine strategies for maintaining or increasing retention:

1. Create a safe and welcoming environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make the physical environment comfortable• Speak to clients in a friendly way
2. Stay organized and keep up-to-date records	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask clients for the best way to reach them• Ask clients for updated information at every interaction
3. Discuss your role and expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss staff roles and expectations• Know where clients can go for help• Let clients know you are there to help
4. Educate clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate on the importance of retention• Encourage questions• Connect to TIC and other supportive services
5. Identify barriers and work to overcome them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask clients about barriers• Use a strengths-based approach to help clients build skills to overcome barriers
6. Identify and respond to signs of low retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look out for signs of low retention• Ask clients why it's happening and how you can help
7. Remind clients about appointments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The most important strategy• Know agency protocol and let clients know what to expect• More frequent reminders are more effective
8. Follow up when appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give clients choice in contact information and frequency• Check in with clients to stay connected
9. Consider specialized staff to work on retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a staff member dedicated to retention efforts• Increase client support and organizational capacity



Retention Statistics



HIV Care Continuum and National Statistics, from the [HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report 2021; 26\(No. 2\)](#) as displayed on HIV.gov's [HIV Care Continuum webpage](#).

The CDC's **HIV Care Continuum** is used to track the national progress of PWH (persons living with HIV) and defines **retention** as the percentage of clients who had 2 or more viral load or CD4 tests at least 3 months apart. In the 2019 HIV Care Continuum:

- 81% of clients were linked to care
- 50% of clients were retained in care
- 57% were virally suppressed

The [2021 HIV National Strategic Plan](#) has set a linkage goal of 95% for the newly diagnosed and seeks to create conditions that increase retention rates. Compared to the national statistics, [as of 2015 New Jersey has reached](#) 70 % linkage and 48% retention for clients diagnosed with HIV.

To find out more about retention and the care continuum, visit the [CDC website](#) or [HIV.gov](#).

Evidence-Based Interventions for Retention

The Southern Initiative

The Southern Initiative increased retention among minority populations in the South using these strategies:

1. Staff identified at-risk clients and barriers to care
2. Community Health Workers who were assigned to clients:
 - Built rapport with compassionate and respectful communication
 - Actively linked clients to care services
 - Used texts and calls to answer questions, send reminders, and encourage clients

For more information, visit the [Southern Initiative's webpage](#) on the National Association of County and City Health Officials' (NACCHO) website.

Stay Connected

In the Stay Connected intervention, agencies use these strategies to increase retention:

1. All staff create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere



2. Retention specialists specifically work with clients on retention by:

- Checking in with clients in between sessions
- Providing 7-day and 24-hour appointment reminders
- Having one-on-one sessions with clients who missed appointments to discuss barriers

For more information, visit the [Stay Connected page](#) on the CDC's website.

