Ending the HIV Epidemic: A County of San Diego Overview

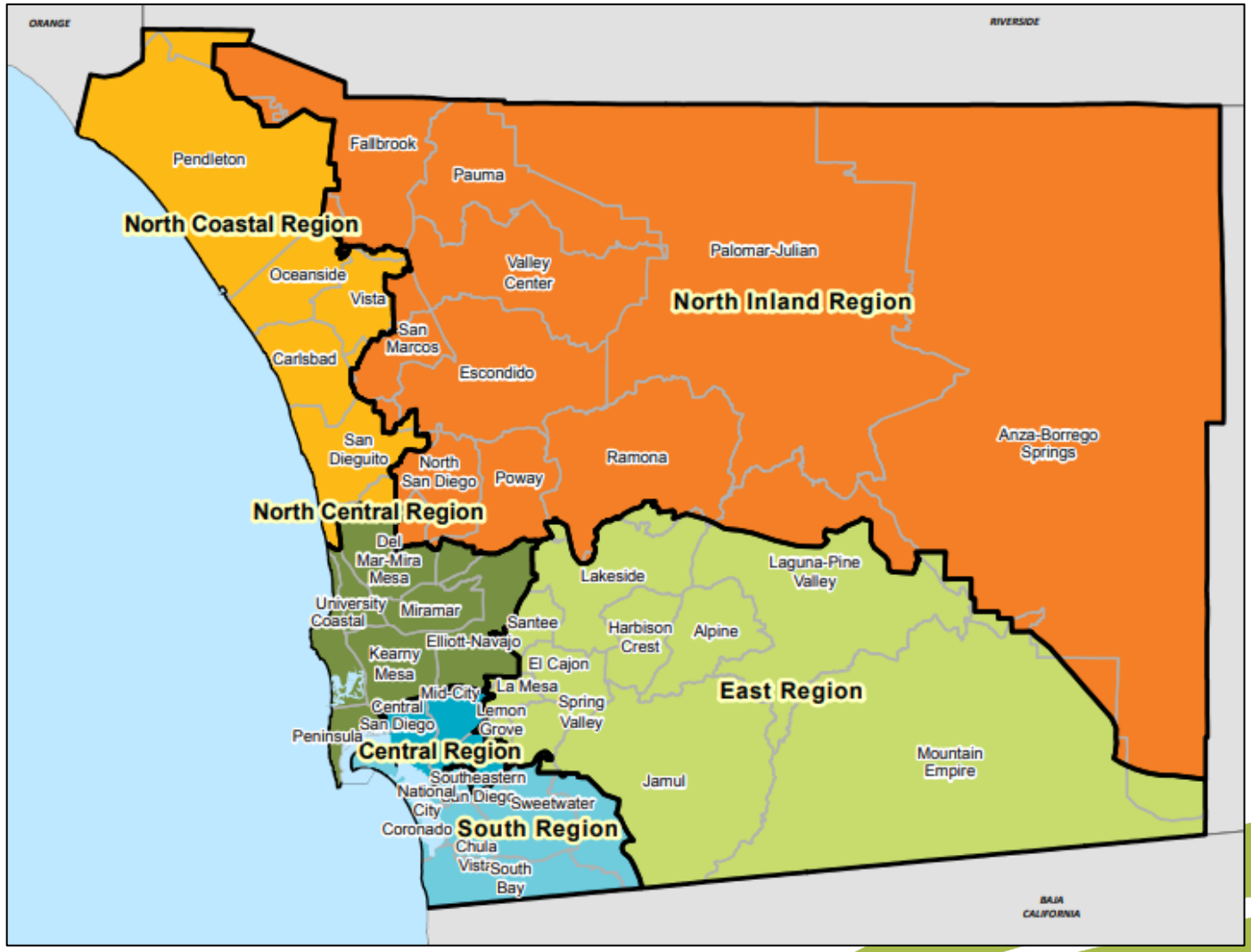
Felipe Ruiz (he/him), DrPH, MPH, Interim Assistant Chief

Today's Agenda

1. San Diego County context
2. Mission and guiding frameworks
3. Epidemiological data
4. Key initiatives across testing, treatment, and prevention
5. Focused efforts for Latine communities
6. Whole-person care and harm reduction
7. Lessons learned and discussion

County Snapshot: Understanding Our Setting

- 3.3 million residents
- 4,200 square miles
- 18 unincorporated cities and 30+ unincorporated communities
- Fourth busiest land border crossing in the world
- Variable access to services, transportation, and infrastructure

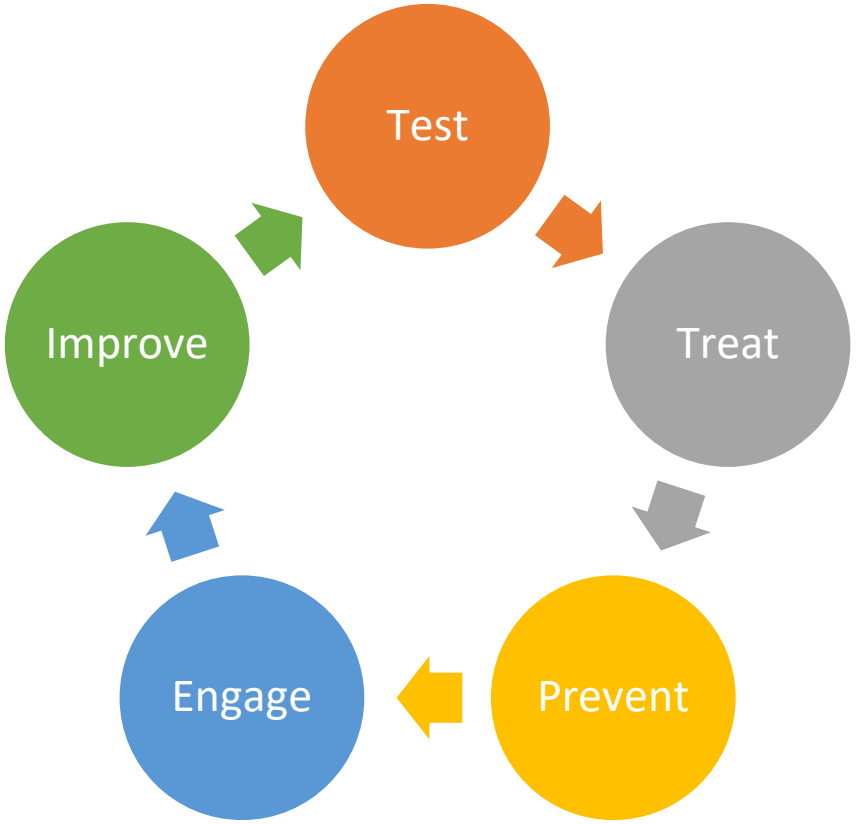


HIV, STD & Hepatitis Branch (HSHB)

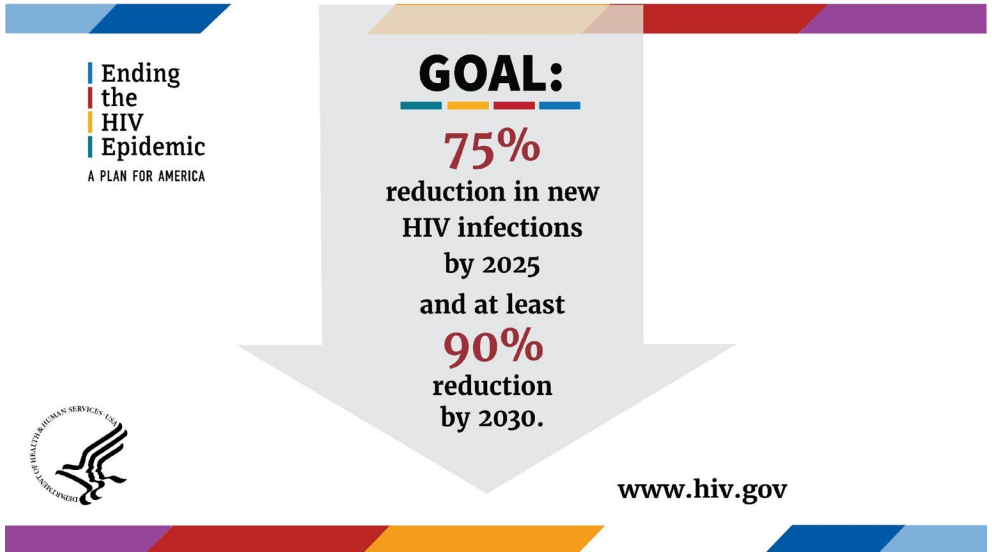
Improve health outcomes in communities disproportionately impacted by HIV, STIs and viral hepatitis.

HSHB Guiding Frameworks

GETTING 2 ZERO
STOP HIV



Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE)





HIV Epidemiological Snapshot

- As of 12/31/25 -14,783 individuals living with HIV in San Diego County
- 426 new diagnoses in 2025
- 54% of all diagnoses in last five years among Hispanic/Latine individuals
- 1 in 5 cases among Hispanic/Latine individuals were late diagnoses



Testing and Identification

Focused Testing

Routine, Opt-Out Testing

Self Testing

Integrated Testing

Treatment Access

Primary Care

Medical Specialty

Home Health Care

Home Hospice

Oral Health

Case Management

Mental Health

Substance Use Treatment

Early Intervention Services

Home-Based Care Coordination

Temporary Housing Support

Emergency Financial Assistance

Food Assistance

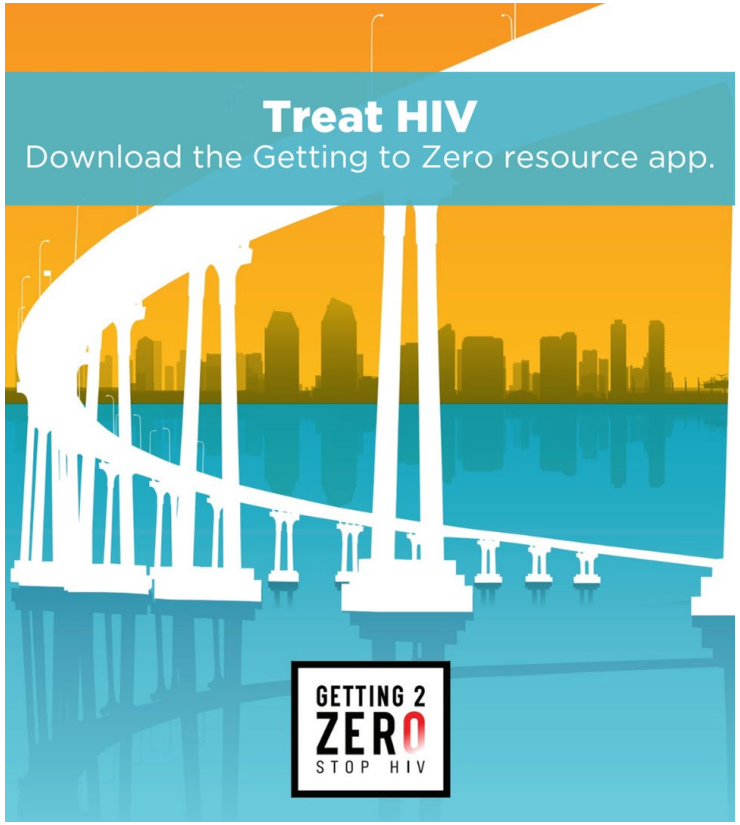
Legal Assistance

HIV Prevention

- Outreach
- Linkage to ART
- Linkage to PrEP
- Testing
- Health & Risk Reduction Education
- Benefits Navigation
- Comprehensive Services for PWID
- Comprehensive Services for Transgender Persons
- Digital Resources
- Partner Services

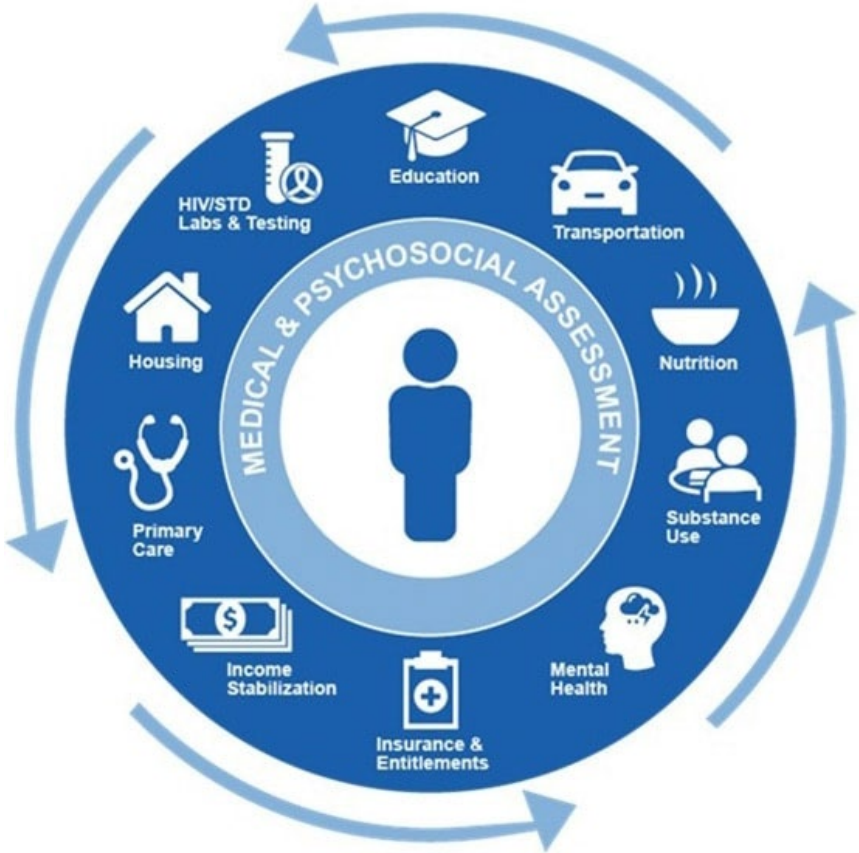
Focused Activities for Latine Communities

- Whole Person Care
- Testing Services
- Getting to Zero Resource App
- Community Engagement



Whole-Person Care

- HRSA Special Projects of National Significance (SPNS) project
- Expands non-medical case management services (NMCM) to individuals vulnerable to HIV leveraging existing infrastructure
- Conducts outreach using Social Networking Strategy
- Focuses on Latine MSM and transgender people



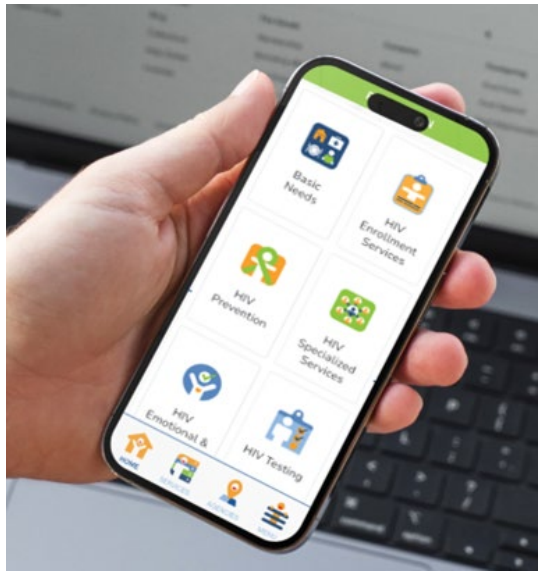
Self-Testing

- Interest in self-testing has increased as a result of changes in political climate
- Free self-testing is available to residents through mail with discreet packaging
- Positive results are connected to County staff for follow-up



Getting to Zero App

- Provides San Diego County residents with easy access to available HIV, STD, and hepatitis prevention and treatment resources and directions for accessing those resources
- Available in multiple languages
- Print copies in English and Spanish
- Services searchable by category, location, and agency



Community Engagement

- Community Engagement Advisory Committee developed
- Variety of community engagement activities, including new and innovative strategies
- Social marketing promotion
- Linkages to healthcare and supportive services as needed
- Identifies opportunities for additional community connection
- Focuses on Latine communities

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

HARM REDUCTION SERVICES PROGRAM

PROGRAM GOALS

- Reduce transmission of HIV, hepatitis C and other blood-borne infections in the community.
- Decrease the number of fatal overdoses.
- Increase the number of syringes that are safely and securely discarded in the community.
- Increase community understanding of the health and social benefits of substance use treatment and harm reduction services.
- Decrease harm for those who use drugs.

PROGRAM SERVICES



INTEGRATED SCREENING ACTIVITIES (HIV AND HCV)
- Onsite rapid testing
- Wound care due to needle injections



DISTRIBUTION OF HARM REDUCTION SUPPLIES
- Naloxone
- Fentanyl and xylazine strips
- Collection and safe disposal of used syringes
- Provision of sterile syringes and safer sex and smoking supplies



WARM HAND-OFFS TO REFERRALS
- Screening and treatment for substance use related medical issues
- Enhanced care management
- Evidence-based services (low threshold medication-assisted treatment, behavioral treatment and recovery services)

PROGRAM SERVICES (CONT'D)



HEALTH EDUCATION
- Transmission of HIV, STIs, hepatitis C
- Proper syringe disposal and overdose prevention



ADDITIONAL SERVICES
- Work alongside businesses, community-based organizations, and other community stakeholders
- Foot outreach teams and community clean ups

PROGRAM FORMAT



MOBILE SERVICES
- San Diego Old Town, Southeast San Diego (planning)
- Twice per week
- Onsite nurse, community health workers

Lessons Learned

Facilitators
Established community trust with providers
Robust system of health and supportive services locally
Coordination between service providers

Barriers
Political climate and immigration concerns
Stigma and medical mistrust
Dearth of bilingual providers
Continuity of care for transborder residents

Thank you!
¡Gracias!

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