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This newsletter is organized to align with the six Social Determinants of Health found in the [Ending the Epidemics Integrated Statewide Strategic Plan](#), addressing the syndemic of HIV, HCV, and STIs in California. More about the *Strategic Plan* is available on the [Office of AIDS \(OA\) website](#).

STAFF HIGHLIGHT

➤ **Julian Castro**

Please join OA in congratulating **Julian Castro** on his promotion to Supervisor I within the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), Eligibility and Operations Section!

Julian has more than five and a half years of experience with CDPH, all within OA. Most recently, he served as an Associate Governmental Program Analyst supporting ADAP, where he contributed to eligibility operations, compliance monitoring, facilitated client access to health insurance coverage, conducted quality assurance, and provided technical assistance to clients and enrollment sites statewide. Prior to his tenure with CDPH, he led teams in the hospitality and customer service sectors, strengthening his leadership and client-centered skills.

In his new role, Julian will oversee Eligibility Unit 3 operations, support staff development, and collaborate with internal and external partners to ensure equitable and efficient access to ADAP services.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from San Diego State University and an Associate of Arts in Social Sciences from Mesa College. Outside of work, Julian enjoys spending time with his wife and their four children, working



on home projects, and traveling.

We are excited to celebrate Julian's well-deserved promotion and his continued contributions to the department!

➤ **Dennis Wong**

Additionally, please join us in congratulating **Dennis Wong**, on his well-deserved promotion to Research Scientist IV (Senior Research Scientist in the new classification system), with ADAP & Care Evaluation & Informatics (ACEI) Branch. Dennis started his new position on February 9, 2026.

Dennis has been with OA since July 2000, starting as a Research Scientist (RS) I, promoted to RS II, and then to RS III in 2010. Dennis has been a critical member of the ACEI team in developing forecasting models and budget methodologies for the OA budget assumptions

and estimates. Dennis also creates informative (and humorous) monthly budget blogs that clearly explain otherwise complex concepts, calculations, and models. He has won multiple awards for his excellent work, including a Public Health Acknowledging My Efforts (PHAME) Award for Core Values in 2025 and Superior Accomplishment Awards in 2015 and 2014.

We are overjoyed to see Dennis's excellent work culminate in a well-deserved promotion. We look forward to continuing to have him work on the assumption & estimate with the ACEI Branch for OA and our clients.

Congratulations, Dennis!

HIV AWARENESS

➤ National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

March 10 is National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NWGHAAD). NWGHAAD highlights the impact HIV and AIDS has on women and girls and is meant to raise support for those at risk or living with HIV. NWGHAAD focuses on education, testing, prevention, and treatment, while reducing stigma. This year, the federal government has chosen not to acknowledge the day. The Well Project partnered with Positive Women's Network – USA, and has taken the lead to honor NWGHAAD! These national organizations focus on HIV and trans and cis women, gender diverse, and transgender communities creating the perfect collaboration. They decided the theme for this year is "Sisterhood, Hope, and Equity." The [Well Project](#) shares and encourages the use of their toolkits to honor the day.

In honor of NWGHAAD, The California Planning Group (CPG) Women's Committee will host a webinar on March 19, 2026. Please continue

reading the newsletter for more information.

➤ National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

March 20th is National Native HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NNHAAD). NNHAAD is held on the first day of Spring and is observed to promote HIV testing, prevention, and treatment in American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian communities. Established in 2007, this day focuses on reducing stigma, honoring those living with or affected by HIV, and addressing unique health disparities. NNHAAD encourages HIV testing and providing culturally appropriate care and support.

➤ Transgender Day of Visibility

In addition, March 31st Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV) a day dedicated to celebrating the resilience, brilliance and courage of transgender and non-binary people. TDOV honors those who live authentically, while also calling attention to the discrimination, stigma, and anti-trans violence that many continue to face. CDPH is committed to addressing these inequities by promoting inclusive public health practices, elevating community voices, and supporting access to affirming care and resources statewide.

Acts of hate and misinformation continue to harm transgender communities. By uplifting diverse gender experiences and fostering understanding, we can help combat stigma and strengthen equity across California. Visibility matters, and when transgender and non-binary people—and allies—stand together against discrimination, we demonstrate collective courage, compassion, and resilience.

To learn more and access resources that support transgender and non-binary communities in California, please visit our [OA Transgender Community Health in California webpage](#).

GENERAL UPDATES

➤ Mpox

OA continues its commitment to providing updated information related to mpox. We have partnered with the Division of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC), a program within the Center of Infectious Diseases and have disseminated a number of documents in an effort to keep our clients and stakeholders informed.

Mpox digital assets continue to be available for LHJs and CBOs on DCDC's [Campaign Toolkits](#) website.

Also, please refer to the [DCDC website](#) to stay informed of mpox updates.

➤ OA's HIV Laws Webpage

We wanted to mention again that OA has updated its [HIV Laws webpage](#) in an effort to improve awareness of important legislative information relating to HIV. This page contains organized links to state laws and regulations, as well as associated fact sheets and letters, all relating to OA's programs on HIV prevention, treatment, care, surveillance, and harm reduction. OA will continue to update this webpage with new links and resources in-line with the passage of new legislative bills.

➤ Office of STIs and HCV (OSH)

Update on Bicillin® L-A (penicillin G benzathine injectable suspension) Shortage: Inventory Review and Clinical Guidance

This [health update](#) is issued to inform healthcare providers about the Bicillin L-A shortage and provide medication alternatives.

[Pfizer recently updated the estimated recovery of the Bicillin L-A shortage](#) to the 4th Quarter of

2026. Healthcare providers and entities should continue to prioritize long-acting penicillin-based treatments (Bicillin® L-A & Lentocilin®) for the treatment of pregnant people with syphilis and infants exposed to syphilis in utero.

Extencilline® is no longer available for distribution. Oral doxycycline is an acceptable alternative treatment for non-pregnant adults with primary, secondary, early/late latent syphilis and syphilis of unknown duration.

➤ HIV/STI/HCV Integration

Again, we're excited to share an update on the progress of our integration of CDPH's HIV, STI, and HCV programs into a single new Division.

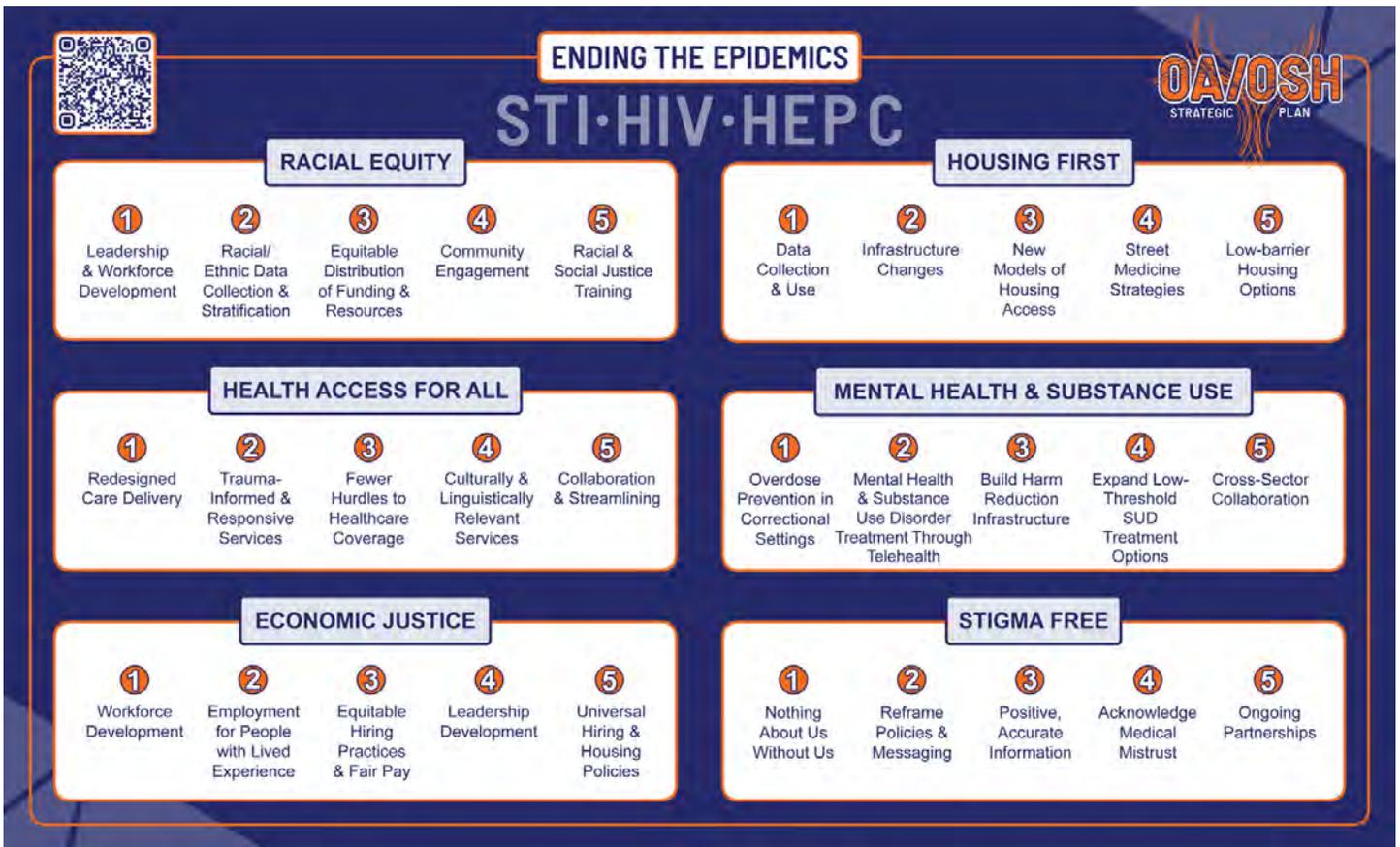
On October 16, 2025, the position announcement for the new Chief of the Division of HIV, HCV, and STIs was released with a final closing date of November 15, 2025. This position can be based out of Sacramento or Contra Costa Counties. Both MDs and PhDs with relevant experience were encouraged to apply.

We anticipate you won't see many immediate changes or impacts to existing contracts/ grants or points of contacts from this first step and that more changes will unfold as planning continues.

As we begin planning for further integration, we will rely on the expertise of our teams to inform the direction and pace of our changes and also see opportunities for our many partners to weigh-in on the integration of our teams as well.

We are excited for the accomplishment of this huge milestone and are committed to continuing to align our services in a coordinated syndemic manner to better serve individuals at risk of acquiring HIV, STIs, and HCV.

As always, we will continue to keep you apprised on our journey as we move forward and more information develops.



ENDING THE EPIDEMICS STRATEGIC PLAN OA/OSH

The **visual above** is a high-level summary of our *Strategic Plan* that organizes 30 Strategies across six Social Determinants of Health.

OA and OSH would like you to continue to use and share the [Strategic Plan](#) and the [Implementation Blueprint](#). These documents address HIV as a syndemic with HCV and other STIs, through a Social Determinants of Health lens.

For technical assistance in implementing the *Strategic Plan*, California LHJs and CBOs can visit [Facente Consulting's webpage](#).

HEALTH ACCESS FOR ALL

➤ Strategy 1: Redesigned Care Delivery

OA continues to implement its **Building Healthy Online Communities (BHOC)** self-testing program to allow for rapid OraQuick test orders in all jurisdictions in California. The program, [TakeMeHome](#), is advertised on gay dating apps, where users see an ad for home testing and are offered a free HIV-home test kit.

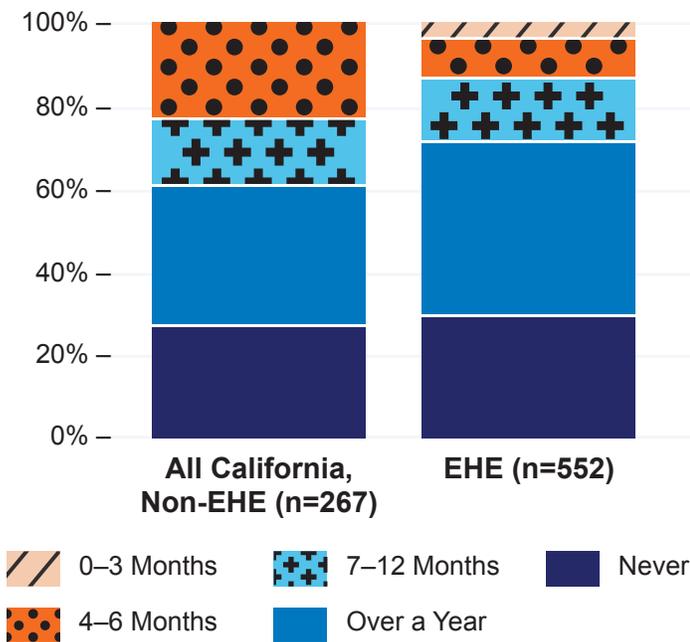
In January, 267 individuals in 36 counties ordered self-test kits, with 196 (73.4%) individuals ordering 2 tests. Additionally, OA's existing TakeMeHome Program continues in the six California Consortium Phase I Ending the HIV Epidemic in America counties. Between the program's initiation in September 1, 2020, and January 31, 2026, 21,283 tests have been distributed. This month, mail-in lab tests

(including dried blood spot tests for syphilis, and Hepatitis C, as well as 3-site tests for gonorrhea and chlamydia) accounted for 429 (77.7%) of the 552 total tests distributed in EHE counties. Of those ordering rapid tests, 90 (73.2%) ordered 2 tests.

TAKEMEHOME



HIV Test History Among Individuals Who Ordered TakeMeHome Kits, Jan. 2026



Since September 2020, 2,254 test kit recipients have completed the anonymous follow up survey from EHE counties; there have been 1004 responses from the California expansion since January 2023.

Additional Key Characteristics	EHE	All California, Non-EHE
Of those sharing their gender, were cisgender men	46.9%	54.2%
Of those sharing their race or ethnicity, identify as Hispanic or Latinx	31.9%	39.9%
Were 17-29 years old	39.5%	35.2%
Of those sharing their number of sex partners, reported 3 or more in the past year	41.1%	40.0%

HEALTH ACCESS FOR ALL

➤ Strategy 3: Fewer Hurdles to Healthcare Coverage

As of February 28, 2026, there are 305 PrEP-AP enrollment sites and 281 clinical provider sites that currently make up the [PrEP-AP Provider network](#).

[Data on active PrEP-AP clients](#) can be found in the three tables displayed on the next page of this newsletter.

As of February 28, 2026, the number of ADAP clients enrolled in each respective ADAP Insurance Assistance Program are shown in the [table on the top of page 7](#).

Survey Highlights	EHE	All California, Non-EHE
Would recommend TakeMeHome to a friend	95.1%	94.6%
Identify as a man who has sex with other men	45.5%	49.0%
Reported having been diagnosed with an STI in the past year	8.1%	9.6%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Insurance Coverage:

Current Age	PrEP-AP Only		PrEP-AP With Medi-Cal		PrEP-AP With Medicare		PrEP-AP With Private Insurance		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	253	9%	---	---	---	---	8	0%	261	10%
25 - 34	870	33%	---	---	---	---	102	4%	972	36%
35 - 44	741	28%	1	0%	---	---	96	4%	838	31%
45 - 64	399	15%	2	0%	5	0%	90	3%	496	19%
65+	26	1%	---	---	74	3%	8	0%	108	4%
TOTAL	2,289	86%	3	0%	79	3%	304	11%	2,675	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Age and Race/Ethnicity:

Current Age	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
18 - 24	147	5%	1	0%	28	1%	18	1%	---	---	43	2%	4	0%	20	1%	261	10%
25 - 34	587	22%	2	0%	92	3%	58	2%	4	0%	168	6%	12	0%	49	2%	972	36%
35 - 44	525	20%	3	0%	62	2%	61	2%	2	0%	143	5%	6	0%	36	1%	838	31%
45 - 64	297	11%	1	0%	30	1%	18	1%	---	---	123	5%	1	0%	26	1%	496	19%
65+	15	1%	---	---	5	0%	4	0%	---	---	79	3%	---	---	5	0%	108	4%
TOTAL	1,571	59%	7	0%	217	8%	159	6%	6	0%	556	21%	23	1%	136	5%	2,675	100%

Active PrEP-AP Clients by Gender and Race/Ethnicity:

Gender	Latinx		American Indian or Alaskan Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander		White		More Than One Race Reported		Decline to Provide		TOTAL	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Female	43	2%	---	---	1	0%	14	1%	1	0%	14	1%	---	---	3	0%	76	3%
Male	1,459	55%	6	0%	198	7%	143	5%	4	0%	518	19%	21	1%	120	4%	2,469	92%
Trans	63	2%	---	---	16	1%	2	0%	1	0%	17	1%	1	0%	4	0%	104	4%
Unknown	6	0%	1	0%	2	0%	---	---	---	---	7	0%	1	0%	9	0%	26	1%
TOTAL	1,571	59%	7	0%	217	8%	159	6%	6	0%	556	21%	23	1%	136	5%	2,675	100%

All PrEP-AP charts prepared by: ADAP Fiscal Forecasting Evaluation and Monitoring (AFFEM) Section, ADAP and Care Evaluation and Informatics Branch, Office of AIDS. Client was eligible for PrEP-AP as of run date: 02/28/2026 at 12:46:03 AM
Data source: ADAP Enrollment System. Site assignments are based on the site that submitted the most recent application.

ADAP Insurance Assistance Program	Number of Clients Enrolled	Percentage Change from January
Employer Based Health Insurance Premium Payment (EB-HIPP) Program	623	-22.47%
Office of AIDS Health Insurance Premium Payment (OA-HIPP) Program	6,626	-12.28%
Medicare Premium Payment Program (MPPP)	2,604	-9.60%
Total	9,853	-44.36%

Source: ADAP Enrollment System

HOUSING FIRST

651 Bannon Street, Suite 400
 Sacramento, CA 95811
 Attn: HUD Reporting Coordinator

➤ Strategy 1: Data Collection & Use

HOPWA Annual Action Plan Public Comment Period

The public comment period for the 2026–2027 Annual Action Plan (AAP) of multiple state housing programs, including OA’s Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program, began on February 28, 2026, and ends at 5:00 PM on March 30, 2026. The AAP explains how the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) plans to utilize U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding to support various housing programs to meet the needs of California’s low-income residents.

The AAP is available online for review at [Annual Action Plans and Amendments | California Department of Housing and Community Development](#). Comments and questions can be provided through phone at (916) 776-7525, email to FederalReporting@hcd.ca.gov, or mail to:

**California Department of Housing and Community Development,
 Federal Community Development Branch**

HCD is hosting a public hearing virtually and in-person on Thursday, March 19, 2026, from 2:00 – 3:00 PM. The hearing will summarize updates to the 2026–2027 AAP and provide public comment opportunity. [Advanced registration is required](#) at (https://hcd-ca-gov.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_WAZKgo0jQA2jkWVzmJkGYA).

Webinar details, including access instructions, will be provided in a confirmation email upon registration.

[Translation services and auxiliary aides](#) to improve access to the public hearing are available upon email request to HCD at FederalReporting@hcd.ca.gov by March 12, 2026.

RACIAL EQUITY

➤ Strategy 4: Community Engagement

The California Planning Group (CPG) Women’s Committee invites community partners and community members to join us for a webinar in recognition of National Women and Girls HIV/

AIDS Awareness Day – a day dedicated to raising awareness about the impact of HIV on women and girls and show support for those living with HIV.

The webinar will be on March 19, 2026, from 10 AM – 12PM. It will feature an OA data presentation, a presentation from Dr. Jamila K Stockman, and a consumer panel highlighting women’s service needs. It will also include flash talks showcasing women-focused efforts from Project Empowerment and PrEP and PEP Navigator demonstration projects.

We hope you will join us for this meaningful and informative webinar!

Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81250121800?pwd=95alchRfa1oEttRRlIae35a5ddmZfmj.1>

Meeting ID: 812 5012 1800

Passcode: 361702

RACIAL EQUITY

➤ Strategy 5: Racial and Social Justice Training

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers free capacity building assistance (CBA) through training, technical assistance, and other resources to reduce HIV infection and improve health outcomes for people with HIV in the United States. Its CBA Provider Network provides CBA on a vast variety of HIV prevention related topics! To submit a CBA request, please contact the Local Capacity Building and Program Development Unit at CBA@cdph.ca.gov.

For [questions regarding *The OA Voice*](#), please send an e-mail to angelique.skinner@cdph.ca.gov.