

- Awareness
- Updates
- Strategic Plan
- Health Access for All
- Racial Equity

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

➤ Dr. Marisa Ramos

We are pleased to announce that **Dr. Marisa Ramos** has been selected as the new Syndemic Division Chief for the Division of HIV, HCV, and STIs, effective July 20, 2026. Dr. Ramos brings extensive leadership experience within CDPH, deep expertise in public health, and a strong commitment to advancing data-driven, community-centered approaches to infectious disease prevention and response.

For nearly three decades, Dr. Ramos has advanced equity, innovation, and integrated systems of care. Prior to her promotion, she served as Chief OA, where she managed a half-billion-dollar statewide portfolio and lead a team of 200 professionals dedicated to confronting HIV through a syndemic approach. As OA Chief, Dr. Ramos has helped guide California toward a more unified, person-centered public health model. She led the development of the state's first integrated strategic plan for HIV, STIs, and HCV and transformed the California Planning Group into a statewide syndemic body that elevates community voices in program and policy development.

Dr. Ramos's foundation in research and epidemiology—built over 30 years of managing data systems, research initiatives, and surveillance efforts, and presenting locally and



internationally on refugee and Latine health—has shaped her belief that public health must be both scientifically rigorous and deeply rooted in community realities. She earned her Master's and PhD in Biological Nutrition with an emphasis in Epidemiology from UC Davis.

Her leadership style, shaped by her background in teaching, emphasizes mentorship, transparency, and transformational development. She has built enduring partnerships with local health jurisdictions, community organizations, and federal agencies; championed culturally relevant initiatives such as Project

Empowerment, an HIV prevention effort focused on priority populations; and fostered trust through collaboration, humility, and steadfast engagement.

In this new role, Dr. Ramos will lead the Division as a whole, working in partnership with leaders and staff across both OA and the Office of STIs and HCV. She has expressed a strong commitment to listening, learning from the expertise and distinct histories of both offices, honoring each offices' distinct organizational culture, and ensuring that HIV, HCV, and STI programs are each respected and supported as the Division moves forward.

Outside of work, Dr. Ramos finds balance and joy in teaching, tending her garden, staying active at the gym, knitting, and spending meaningful time with her family—activities that keep her grounded, inspired, and connected to the values that guide her leadership.

Congratulations Dr. Ramos!

HIV AWARENESS

➤ National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day

September 18th is National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day (NHAAD). NHAAD is observed to bring awareness to and celebrate the increasing number of people living long and full lives with HIV. Advancements in treatment have enabled a person living with HIV, in care, and virally suppressed, a similar life expectancy to one living without HIV. NHAAD is also meant to highlight the complex and unique challenges long-term survivors face such as HIV-related comorbidities, co-infections, and social and mental health needs. In addition, as people age, they are less aware of their HIV risk factors and are less likely to get tested. This day is observed to encourage HIV testing and raise awareness

about challenges faced by those aging with HIV.

➤ National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

September 27 National Gay Men's HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NGMHAAD). NGMHAAD is observed to highlight the issues related to HIV/AIDS among gay and bisexual men. Testing and bringing awareness to the various prevention options such as PrEP, are promoted. While much progress has been made with HIV prevention and treatment, challenges such as stigma, homophobia, racism, and discrimination, still contribute to barriers to care and prevention. NGMHAAD also encourages conversation around stigma, prevention, and testing.

The [two figures on the next page](#) give a glimpse of PrEP Assistance Program (AP) use among gay men in California. [For more information on PrEP-AP](#), please email PrEP.Support@cdph.ca.gov.

GENERAL UPDATES

➤ Mpox

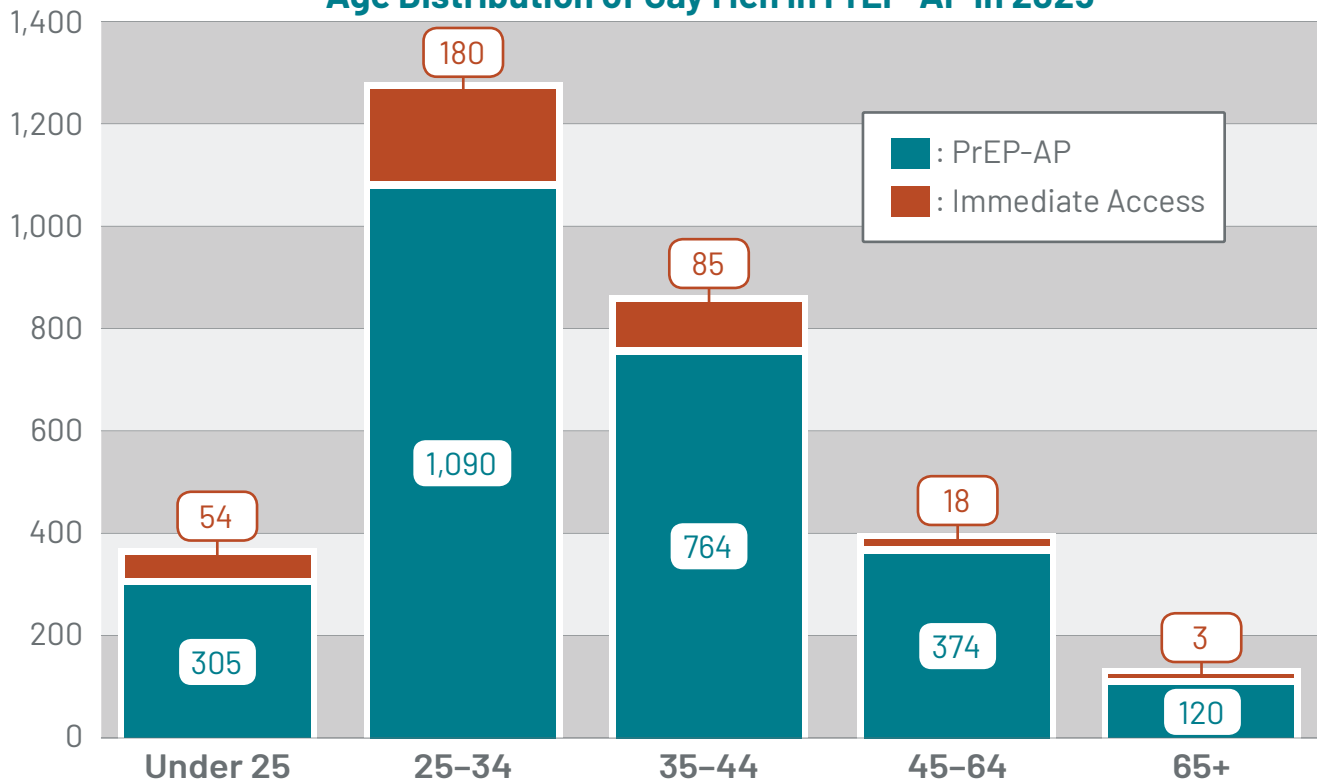
OA continues its commitment to providing updated information related to mpox. We have partnered with the Division of Communicable Disease Control (DCDC), a program within the Center of Infectious Diseases and have disseminated a number of documents in an effort to keep our clients and stakeholders informed.

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

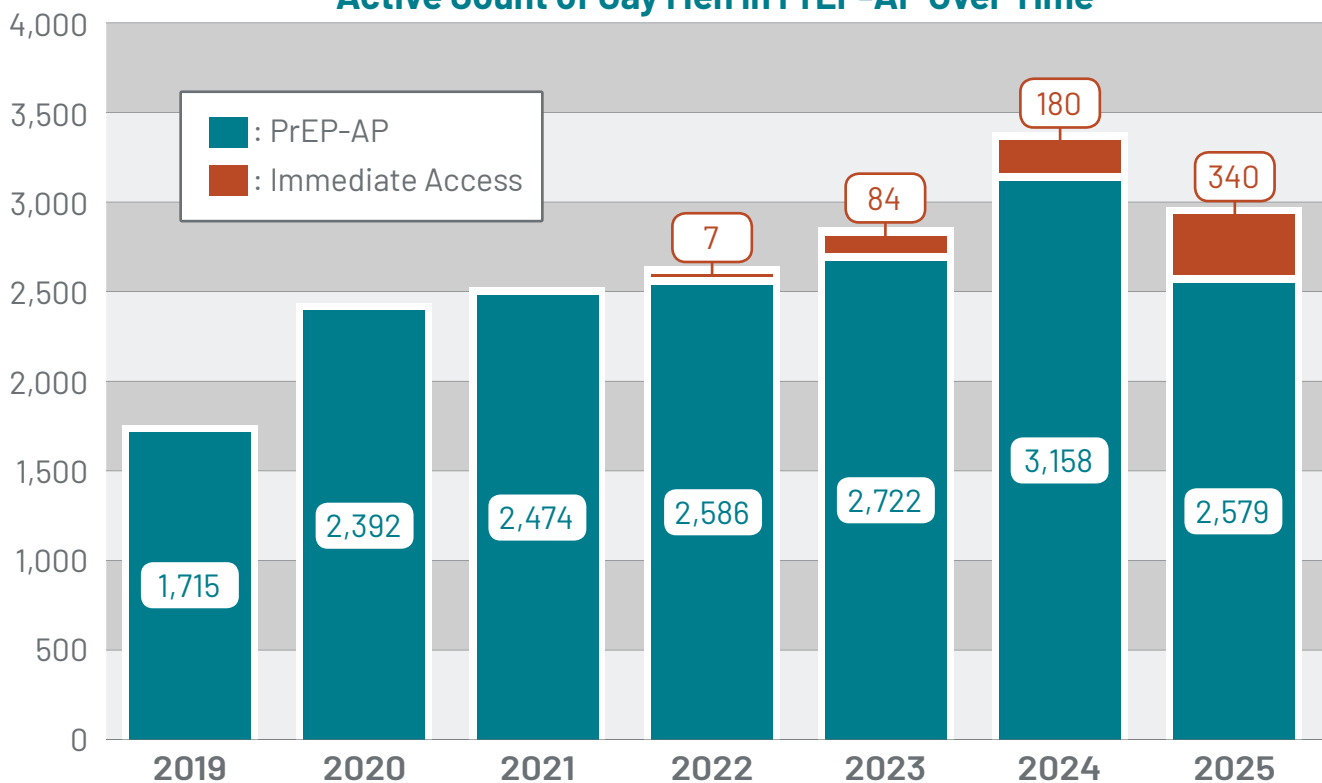
Also, please refer to the [DCDC website](#) to stay informed of mpox updates.

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Age Distribution of Gay Men in PrEP-AP in 2025



Active Count of Gay Men in PrEP-AP Over Time



Active Client: Clients are considered active if they receive a medication dispense, a medical-out-of-pocket expense, or both during the specified time period. The first full year of PrEP-AP was 2019. Immediate Access began in July 2022. Data include clients that specified gender as "Male" or "Transgender Female to Male" and sexual orientation as "Gay, Lesbian, or Homosexual".

Prepared by: ADAP Fiscal Forecasting (AFF) Section, ADAP and Care Evaluation and Informatics Branch, Office of AIDS.

Data source: ADAP Enrollment System 08/14/2026.

➤ HIV/STI/HCV Integration

As we mentioned earlier in this newsletter and in last month's issue of *The OA Voice*, we are excited that **Dr. Marisa Ramos** has been selected as the new Syndemic Division Chief for the Division of HIV, HCV, and STIs (DoHHS).

In this role, Dr. Ramos will lead the new DoHHS as a whole, working in partnership with leaders and staff across both OA and the Office of STIs and HCV (OSH).

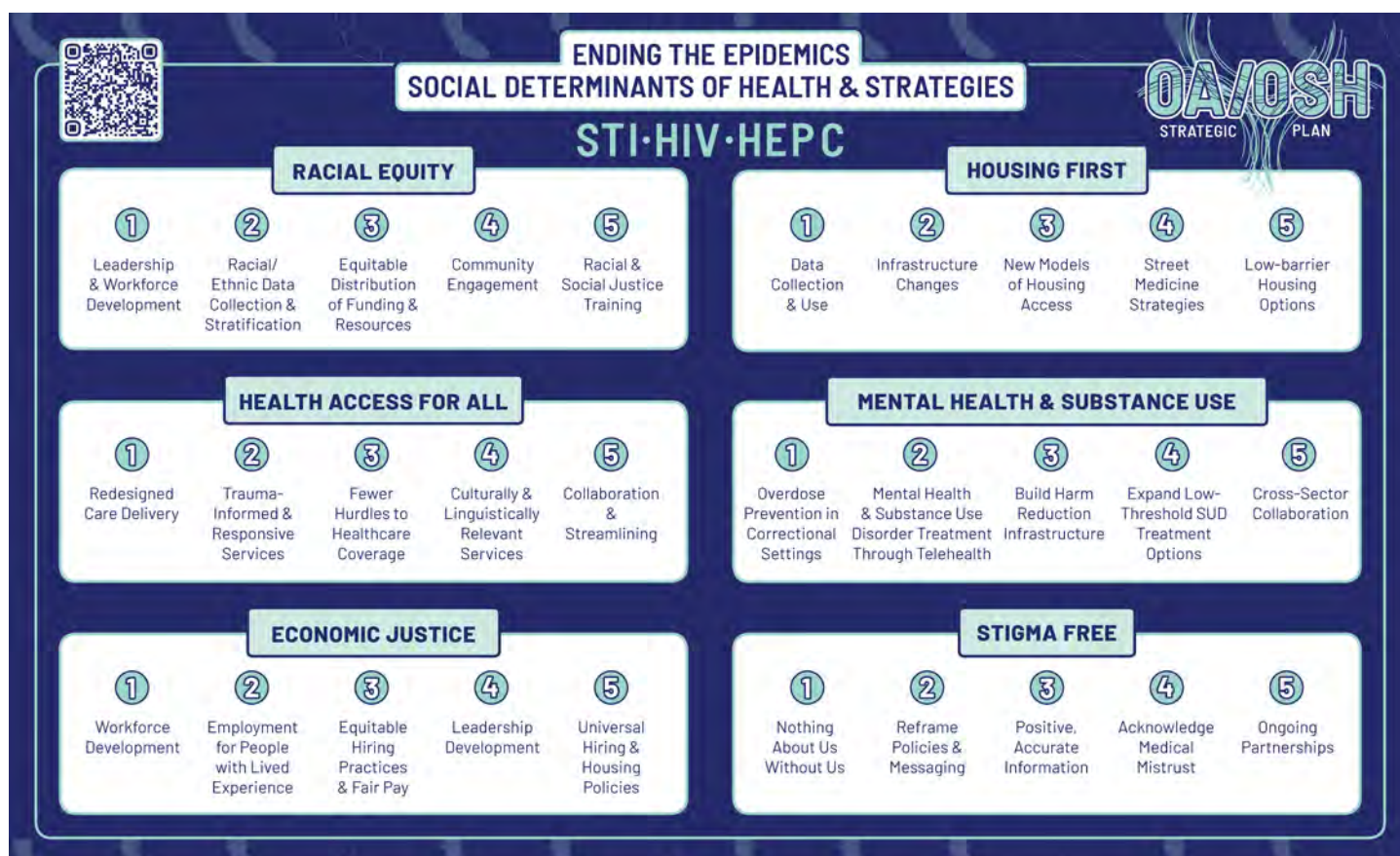
Throughout this integration, we continue to align our services in a coordinated syndemic manner to better serve individuals at risk of acquiring HIV, STIs, and HCV in California. We will continue to keep you updated on any new events as we continue with the transition.

ENDING THE EPIDEMICS STRATEGIC PLAN OA/OSH

The **visual below** 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 Social Determinants of Health.

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



HEALTH ACCESS FOR ALL

TAKEMEHOME

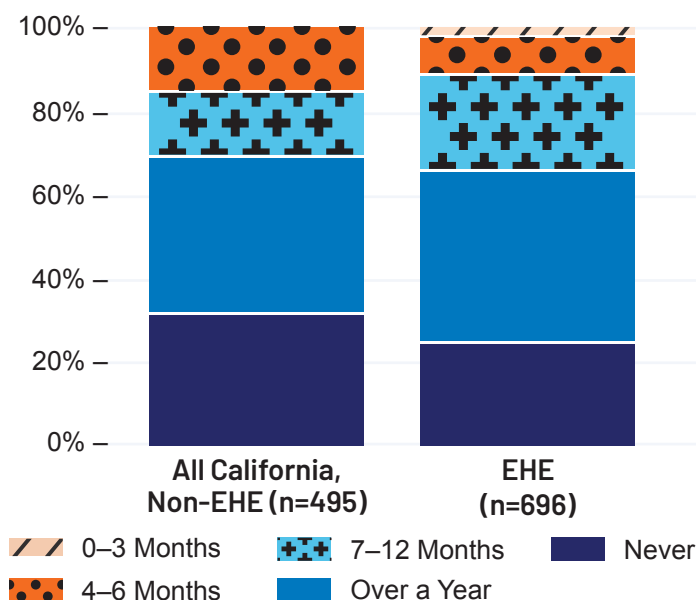


➤ Strategy 1: Redesigned Care Delivery

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** (TMH) is advertised on gay dating apps, where users see an ad for home testing and are offered a free HIV-home test kit.

In July, 495 individuals in 38 counties ordered self-test kits, with 363 (73.3%) 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 July 31, 2026, 25,419 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 350 (50.3%) of the 696 total tests distributed in EHE counties. Of those ordering rapid tests, 264 (76.3%) ordered 2 tests.

HIV Test History Among Individuals Who Ordered TakeMeHome Kits, July 2026



Additional Key Characteristics	EHE	All California, Non-EHE
Of those sharing their gender, were cisgender men	53.2%	53.8%
Of those sharing their race or ethnicity, identify as Hispanic or Latinx	39.5%	36.2%
Were 17-29 years old	38.4%	36.4%
Of those sharing their number of sex partners, reported 3 or more in the past year	44.8%	40.3%

Since September 2020, 2,590 test kit recipients have completed the anonymous follow up survey from EHE counties; there have been 1,179 responses from the California expansion since January 2023.

Take Me Home Survey Highlights	EHE	All California, Non-EHE
Would recommend TakeMeHome to a friend	95.3%	94.5%
Identify as a man who has sex with other men	43.9%	47.8%
Reported having been diagnosed with an STI in the past year	8.0%	8.8%

HEALTH ACCESS FOR ALL

➤ Strategy 3: Fewer Hurdles to Healthcare Coverage

As of August 31, 2026, there are 359 PrEP-AP enrollment sites and 245 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.

As of August 31, 2026, the number of ADAP clients enrolled in each respective ADAP Insurance Assistance Program are shown in the [table at the top of page eight](#).

RACIAL EQUITY

➤ Strategy 4: Community Engagement

Announcement: Annual Ending the Syndemic Symposium



We are excited to announce [registration is open](#) for our 5th annual Ending the Syndemic Symposium!

The free virtual symposium will be held Tuesday, September 29th thru Thursday, October 1st from 12 – 4PM.

- Day 1 Theme: Racial Equity
- Day 2 Theme: Stigma Free
- Day 3 Theme: Health Access for All

The Ending the Syndemic Symposium is sponsored by CDPH/OA and will offer an opportunity for California Counties and their funded Community Programs to share best practices and innovations in serving the communities most impacted by HIV, HCV, and STIs.

Simultaneous Spanish translation will be available at all sessions.

For more information, please visit the [Symposium event website](#).

RACIAL EQUITY

➤ Strategy 4: Community Engagement

Project Empowerment & PrEP Navigation Projects – Special Listening Session

We will be holding a special RFA listening session in lieu of our regularly scheduled September Prevention Partners Webinar on Thursday, September 24th from 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

We will soon begin planning for the next iteration of the following RFAs and we want to hear from you:

- PrEP Navigator Projects 2028–31
- Project Empowerment 2028–32

The full 90 minutes will be dedicated to presenting on the current versions of these two RFAs. We will use this as an opportunity for community engagement and will utilize the feedback in developing the next version of these very important RFAs. Your input matters!

An invitation will be sent soon. We hope to see you there!

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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	329	12%	---	---	---	---	8	0%	337	12%
25 - 34	885	33%	---	---	---	---	98	4%	983	36%
35 - 44	735	27%	1	0%	---	---	84	3%	820	30%
45 - 64	423	16%	---	---	2	0%	69	3%	494	18%
65+	20	1%	---	---	45	2%	4	0%	69	3%
TOTAL	2,392	88%	1	0%	47	2%	263	10%	2,703	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	195	7%	---	---	39	1%	24	1%	---	---	46	2%	5	0%	28	1%	337	12%
25 - 34	627	23%	1	0%	84	3%	51	2%	5	0%	151	6%	10	0%	54	2%	983	36%
35 - 44	557	21%	4	0%	47	2%	50	2%	1	0%	121	4%	5	0%	35	1%	820	30%
45 - 64	312	12%	1	0%	29	1%	19	1%	---	---	112	4%	1	0%	20	1%	494	18%
65+	14	1%	---	---	4	0%	3	0%	---	---	46	2%	---	---	2	0%	69	3%
TOTAL	1,705	63%	6	0%	203	8%	147	5%	6	0%	476	18%	21	1%	139	5%	2,703	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	53	2%	---	---	2	0%	11	0%	1	0%	13	0%	1	0%	10	0%	91	3%
Male	1,560	58%	6	0%	183	7%	133	5%	4	0%	433	16%	17	1%	100	4%	2,436	90%
Trans	83	3%	---	---	14	1%	3	0%	1	0%	22	1%	2	0%	8	0%	133	5%
Unknown	9	0%	---	---	4	0%	---	---	---	---	8	0%	1	0%	21	1%	43	2%
TOTAL	1,705	63%	6	0%	203	8%	147	5%	6	0%	476	18%	21	1%	139	5%	2,703	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: 08/31/2026 at 12:02:24 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 July
Employer Based Health Insurance Premium Payment (EB-HIPP) Program	585	0.34%
Office of AIDS Health Insurance Premium Payment (OA-HIPP) Program	6,229	-0.11%
Medicare Premium Payment Program (MPPP)	2,667	1.37%
Total	9,481	1.60%

Source: ADAP Enrollment System

More information for the Project Empowerment & PrEP Navigation Projects listening session is as follows:

Thursday, September 24th, 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84859600439?pwd=S mRH6mmuaomJEXuZ0UY0UfYr64ewaZ.1>

Meeting ID: 848 5960 0439

Passcode: 838077

For [additional questions on this session](#), please contact Matthew.Willis@cdph.ca.gov.

RACIAL EQUITY

➤ Strategy 5: Racial and Social Justice Training

Capacity Building Assistance

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.

