



8 REASONS WHY YOUR CAMPUS NEEDS CONVENIENT AT-HOME STI SAMPLE COLLECTION PROGRAM

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THE STATE OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY HEALTH

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are on the rise, presenting a challenge to the well-being of millions of individuals across the nation. In April 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published the Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance 2019 report which showed that Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) reached an all-time high for the sixth year in a row with a 19%, 56%, and 74% increase in chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis infections, respectively, since 2015¹, and a 9% reduction in HIV infections². Social and health inequities lead to health disparities with racial and ethnic minority populations in the US often experiencing higher rates of infection and lower access to care³.

Enhancing access to STI testing is vital for the college population as college and university students are among the highest-risk populations for acquiring STIs. The CDC estimates that almost half of STIs are diagnosed in adolescents aged between 15-24 years of age. ⁴Chlamydia and gonorrhea screening is recommended by the CDC and United States Preventative Services Taskforce (USPSTF) for all women 15-25 years of age, with additional HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis C recommendations for pregnant women at heightened risk, men who have sex with men, and other populations at increased risk⁵.

Left untreated, STIs can have serious consequences, such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), ectopic pregnancy, infertility, blindness, birth defects, neurological manifestations, and onwards transmission of the infection⁶. These comorbidities cost the US healthcare system nearly \$16 billion annually in direct costs and result in time off and lost productivity⁷. If infections are detected early through proactive screening, nearly all these complications and financial impacts can be substantially mitigated.

Not only are the number of infections on the rise, but they are a burden on the health care system. The CDC reports there were more than 26 million STIs in 2018, which translate into approximately \$16 billion in direct medical costs, this equates to about \$49 per person in the United States⁸. Testing is vital to controlling the spread of STIs. Given the limited access to STI tests during the COVID-19 pandemic, experts suggest the infection rate is likely much higher than estimated. These alarming statistics underscore the importance of providing convenient access to necessary care.

The introduction of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in 2012 has been shown to reduce the risk of HIV infection among individuals at very high risk for HIV infection through sex or injection drug use. Use of this medication is coupled with quarterly medical visits that include HIV and STI screening tests, patient evaluation for safety, and renewed prescriptions. Maintaining a continuum of care with regular screenings, counseling, and prescribing during summer holidays and other periods of university down-time is a particular challenge in the student health space⁹.

TESTING IS A CRUCIAL PART OF CONTROLLING THE SPREAD OF STIS

STIs are identified as a problem on the federal level and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued The 2021-2025 HHS STI National Strategic Plan. This plan outlines a number of initiatives, including innovative access to laboratory testing and preventative resources.

With many asymptomatic cases, testing for STIs is the only way to be sure whether or not you have an infection. Despite the availability of highly accurate tests, the uptake of routine STI screening for young people is low—estimated in one study to be under 12%¹⁰—and has been attributed to numerous factors including the stigma associated with attending STI clinics, embarrassment, and the inconvenience of attending a brick-and-mortar testing location¹¹.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the problem even worse as health departments, clinics, and student health centers across the country continue to remain short-staffed and overwhelmed responding to the national health emergency and stay-at-home orders have restricted clinic attendance. In 2020, up to 83% of STI services were deferred¹². Given the limited access to STI tests during the pandemic, experts suggest the infection rate is likely much higher than estimated¹³.

TECHNIQUES TO PROMOTE UPTAKE OF STI TESTING AMONG STUDENTS

To help reduce potential geographic, transportation, stigma, and privacy barriers to STI testing, at-home sample collection coupled with laboratory-based testing has gained popularity. An at-home method of sample collection doesn't require an appointment and offers access for patients who might not have a primary doctor or desire increased privacy. Mail-in self-testing programs for STIs have noted high uptake, high patient satisfaction, and test positivity rates similar to in-person clinical testing¹⁴.

A recent study of college students at a public university found that offering self-collection options may increase STI testing among asymptomatic college students. Majority (88%) of students indicated they would use self-collection test kits they could take home. They were also open to other methods of self-collection in a private room at student health services (59%). Students were most comfortable with testing procedures involving less human interaction and collecting specimens themselves. Cost, accuracy, confidentiality of tests, and provision of clear “how to” instructions, topped students' concerns¹⁵.

>> THIS PRESENTS AN URGENT CHALLENGE, AS WELL AS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY, FOR UNIVERSITIES TO INCREASE STI TESTING AMONG THEIR STUDENTS.

REASONS WHY YOUR CAMPUS SHOULD IMPLEMENT AN AT-HOME STI SAMPLE COLLECTION PROGRAM THROUGH BINX HEALTH:

1

REACH STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE: THEIR PHONES



Student needs are evolving and the current paradigm for STI testing doesn't resonate. Reach those who aren't responding to traditional methods of seeking care. Digital integration gives students the capability to track their samples and results from their mobile device.

2

A PERSONALIZED APPROACH TO CARE



One size doesn't fit all when it comes to student sexual healthcare. In an integrated at-home STI sample collection program powered by binx health, students are prompted to take a medically guided quiz that recommends the best test for them based on their lifestyle.

3

REDUCE TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS



Transportation is a key barrier students face when seeking care. Typically, college students do not have easy access to their own vehicles and rely on bikes, public transportation, and other methods of transportation. Private and discreet tests located right on-campus or shipped to their homes increases convenience and access to testing.

4

LESS STIGMA AND ANXIETY FOR STUDENTS



Another key barrier when seeking these types of tests is anxiety and stigma associated with having an STI. Visiting specialized STI clinics can be embarrassing for students and cause anxiety. Seeking care is easy, and binx boxes are discreet and private.

5

MOST STUDENTS ARE OPEN TO SELF-COLLECTION METHODS



Studies have shown that college students are open to self-sample collection¹⁴. Self-sample collection that is done in the home is private, discreet and can provide an option that students are more willing to adopt.

6

LOW TOUCH PROGRAMS: NO ADDITIONAL BURDEN ON YOUR STAFF



There is minimal staff time necessary to keep the program running throughout the semester. The programs can be customized to fit the needs of your university, binx provides a number of services to help support your university, including 24/7 customer service, access to binx partner clinicians for resulting and treatment to streamline the process.

7

CONVENIENT AND CONFIDENTIAL



Giving students convenient ways to understand their STI status is important, and testing can be a contributing factor to curbing the spread of infections. binx has streamlined the process of getting tested and made it fast and easy for students. They do not need to waste time scheduling an appointment, sitting in the waiting room of the health center, or having their sample collected by a healthcare professional. They can privately pick up a discreet kit at their convenience (or ship to their home), self-collect their sample and ship it into our partner reference labs. All results are confidential and HIPAA-compliant.

8

MOST STIS ARE ASYMPTOMATIC AND CAN SPREAD WITHOUT KNOWING



Students can have an STI without having any symptoms. Even asymptomatic infections can be spread to partners. In a recent position statement, American Sexually Transmitted Disease Association noted that “identifying STIs, particularly asymptomatic cases, is a critical component of reducing transmission, thus any program that increases rates of testing may enhance overall control efforts”¹⁶. This highlights the importance of testing and having students understand their STI status.

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