

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON EPT: *A PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS STORY IN NEW YORK*

POLICY SUCCESS STORIES

BACKGROUND

In 2023, the Office of Sexual Health and Epidemiology at the New York State Department of Health, AIDS Institute, conducted focus groups to learn more about community perspectives on Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT). The conversations helped launch a new campaign and were the inspiration for rebranding the term EPT to make it more accessible for broad patient populations. This article summarizes the Department's innovative campaign.



National Coalition
of STD Directors

WHAT IS EPT AND WHAT IS NY STATE DOING DIFFERENTLY?

EPT authorizes partners of patients diagnosed with an STI to receive treatment without being directly examined by a provider. In the qualitative research process that included focus groups, New York's team learned many people found the word "therapy" confusing. They often asked, does that mean I'm in counseling with my partner?

From the conversations, the team decided to change the name of the practice to Expedited Partner Treatment, to center the role of treatment in STI prevention, be less confusing, and allow the acronym to remain unchanged.



Expedited Partner Treatment

EPT

WHO WAS IN THE FOCUS GROUPS AND WHAT WAS LEARNED?

The NY team was able to recruit 42 participants—including individuals from high morbidity and rural jurisdictions—to discuss EPT and extract key themes and information for campaign content. In addition to the terminology difference between "therapy" and "treatment" the focus groups provided other lessons they were able to integrate. For example, many of the participants wanted to see themselves in the campaign, which led to the intentional inclusion of diverse identities and backgrounds in the final materials.

The campaign also included a full assessment of existing EPT materials to make sure they were rebranded with "treatment" over "therapy." This was an opportunity for the department to update language across all their materials with a more robust health equity focus, ensuring language was modernized and inclusive. In other words, it opened the doors for de facto quality control and evaluation through an equity lens.

ONCE THE CAMPAIGN MATERIALS WERE FINALIZED, HOW WERE THEY DISTRIBUTED AND WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE?

The campaign was finalized with New York's internal Public Affairs Group, who created the materials and contracted with an approved media buyer to manage the campaign. The materials were posted across multiple social media platforms, including Instagram, X, and Facebook. Unfortunately, the expiration of funds used to support the campaign limited how widespread the reach could ultimately be, but New York was able to track key data like click rates and engagement. From 1/22 to 1/31, the campaign generated 42,408 clicks on social media and 15.7 million impressions.

42,408
clicks

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LESSON LEARNED: NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA

While the response from community and providers included positive feedback and excitement, there were also negative comments on the department's social media posts. Some of this rhetoric was rooted in anti-LGBTQ discourse and demonstrated that stigma still exists when it comes to sexual health, and in particular, community members disproportionately impacted by STIs. This allowed NY to prepare proactively for future campaign efforts by deliberately carving in a strategy for tracking and responding to, if necessary, inappropriate comments.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE CAMPAIGN?

The campaign has led to several opportunities for replication and expansion. For instance, many counties and organizations in New York have reached out to access TA directly from the department on EPT implementation, or to identify ways to develop localized campaigns.

The focus groups also allowed the team to create a matrix for future campaign ideas based on funding fluctuations. This is what the team has described as “leveraging a community-based organization mindset within a state health department setting” to ensure there is movement and flexibility in the face of unknown funding changes and inherent bureaucratic barriers.

Finally, the EPT campaign has also been on display at conferences and across multiple Pride events within New York, including Buffalo Pride, Albany BIPOC Pride, Capital PRIDE, and Pride in the Plaza in Albany. Diane Moore, Public Health Educator at the Department, presented at STI Engage 2024 in Washington, D.C. and shared campaign materials with the audience.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,
PLEASE CHECK OUT
[HEALTH.NY.GOV/EPT](https://health.ny.gov/ept)**

