I am young and positive – now what?

Linking Newly Identified Youth to Care
Maryanne Ombija, EGPAF
Linkage to Care Challenges

- **Structural barriers**: including travel costs, consent for independent care, gender inequality

- **Health care system gaps**: inadequate provider skills, lack of adolescent-friendly services

- **Individual level factors**: disbelief in diagnosis, fear of treatment, substance abuse

Stigma & Discrimination
Linkage to Retention in Care & Treatment

Comprehensive HIV care cascade for 1672 adolescents aged 13-19 at 3, 6 and 12 months after HIV testing, 2003-2012 Haiti

Optimizing linkage to care and initiation and retention on treatment of adolescents with newly diagnosed HIV infection

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AIDS. 2017 Jul 1;31 Suppl 3:S253-S260
Modeled after Successful Linkage to Care Program in Washington, D.C.
Red Carpet Program-RCP

**Goal:** To develop, implement, and evaluate an adolescent- and youth-specific comprehensive linkage to care and early retention program with interlinked facility- and community-level components

**Target Population:** adolescents 15–19 years of age (attending secondary schools and out of school) and youth 20–21 years of age (attending colleges and out of school) newly identified as living with HIV
Program Objectives and Strategies

**RCP Objectives**
- Provide specialized fast-track linkage to care, ART initiation, and retention services to newly diagnosed youth
- Provide platform for the meaningful involvement of adolescents into program design and implementation

**RCP Supported:**
- Health Care Facilities
- Peer Involvement
- Boarding Schools
School and Health Facility Linkages in Homa Bay, Kenya

50 public health care facilities and 25 boarding schools
Meaningful Peer Involvement

- Adolescent and Youth Peer Advisory Group – 36 youth
- County Adolescent Technical Working Group – 12 youth
- Design and implementation

- Feedback on RCP curriculum and school interventions
- Design and monitoring of VIP Express Service
- AY and HIV advocacy
Health Care Facilities Services

- Baseline evaluation for adolescent services
- RCP curriculum development and training of providers
- Supported AYFHS: youth corners, peer counseling, and group psychosocial support

Capacity building:
56 RCP Coordinators & 56 peer educators from 50 health care facilities

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VIP Express Service

- VIP express card
- Fast-track access to 50 RCP healthcare facilities
- Access to one2one toll-free phone hotline

667 VIP cards issued
Boarding School Services

• Meeting with Ministry of Education County, school heads and principals from all 350 secondary schools in Homa Bay – May 2016

• 25 high-volume boarding secondary schools piloted the school-based support program for adolescents and youth living with HIV

• Two-day workshop for 50 adolescent and youth advocates, teachers, matrons, and nurses in 25 boarding schools
Boarding School Services

- Counseling on SRH, HIV, and disclosure
- Support of adherence
- Storage of ART meds
- Linkage to HIV testing and health care facilities

- Anti-stigma education and advocacy
- Reached 5000 students with HIV messaging

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Project Evaluation

• Pre-implementation data:
  - Retrospective medical records review of the youth newly diagnosed during Jul-Dec, 2015
  - Qualitative assessment of adolescent services at 50 health care facilities selected for RCP

• Post-implementation data:
  - Prospective medical records review of the youth newly diagnosed during Jul-Dec, 2016
  - Programmatic project data for July-Dec, 2016

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## Characteristics of Newly Identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-intervention June 2015-Dec 2015 N=393</th>
<th>Post-Intervention June 2016- Dec 2016 N=559</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (years, mean, SD)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>203 (51.7)a</td>
<td>277 (49.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>181 (46.1)</td>
<td>282 (50.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing/Unknown</td>
<td>9 (2.2)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>343 (87.3)</td>
<td>481(86.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46 (11.7)</td>
<td>78 (14.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing/Unknown</td>
<td>4 (1.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linkage to care</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linked to care</td>
<td>222 (56.5)$§</td>
<td>544 (97.3)$§</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not linked to care</td>
<td>171 (43.5)$§</td>
<td>15 (3.0)$§</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>N=222b</td>
<td>N=544b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiated on ART</td>
<td>160 (72.1)c</td>
<td>430 (79.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-ART</td>
<td>62 (27.9)c</td>
<td>114 (21.0)d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Number (percentage); *b Data available for those linked to care; *c In care, not initiated on ART; *d Some recently identified patients have not yet had the chance to start ART

$p<0.0001$
## Timing of the Linkage to Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time to Linkage to Care</th>
<th>Pre-intervention N=215&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Post-intervention N=544&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15–19 yrs</td>
<td>20–21 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 months</td>
<td>108 (90.0)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>86 (90.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>4 (3.3)</td>
<td>5 (5.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>2 (1.7)</td>
<td>2 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;3 months</td>
<td>6 (5.0)</td>
<td>2 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Data available from 215 patients out of 222 linked to care in pre-intervention period and for 544 patients linked to care in post-intervention period

<sup>b</sup> Number (percentage)

There was no difference in the timing of linkage to care and treatment; most adolescents and youth within one month of diagnosis.
Implementation of Red Carpet Program was associated with significant improvement in linkage to and early retention in care among adolescents and youth in Homa Bay, Kenya.
Progress to Date, October 2017

- Expansion of the project to 11 additional sites in Homa Bay and Turkana (new area)
- Baseline data collection and site assessments conducted for all new sites
- 66 health facilities and 67 schools RCP participants
- Conducted sensitizations for community and education leaders from 67 secondary boarding schools on support for adolescents living with HIV
- Training of adolescent advocates from 42 schools
- Tracking of the established Red Carpet patient cohort for the 6 months retention and virologic outcome
Summary

• Linkage to and retention in care remains a significant barrier to achieving 90-90-90 targets among adolescents and youth

• Innovative, evidence-based approaches must be considered and may include:
  — More active youth engagement
  — Efforts to promote stronger links between health facilities and schools and community
  — Youth-friendly health service delivery
Acknowledgements

• Healthcare workers
• Teachers and school staff
• County Ministry of Health
• County Ministry of Education

Adolescents of Homa Bay