## Optimizing the HIV Care Environment

### What is the HIV Care Continuum?
Antiretroviral therapy (ART; see Fact Sheet 403) can reduce the risk of serious illness, death, or transmission of HIV. ART is now recommended for all people living with HIV (PLHIV) in a strategy called “treatment as prevention” (TasP).

Yet, only half of people living with HIV (PLHIV) around the world are aware of their status. Among those who know their HIV status, many do not receive ART in a timely manner, fail to stay engaged in care, or do not achieve sustained viral suppression.

The **HIV care continuum** is a way of describing the steps in the care and treatment of PLHIV, which include:

- Diagnosis (HIV testing; see Fact Sheet 102)
- Getting into medical care
- Staying in medical care
- Prescription of ART
- Achieving viral suppression (undetectable viral load; see Fact Sheet 125)

The care continuum can help communities and health programs understand how well PLHIV receive care and treatment, improve health, and prevent new infections.

### What are the IAPAC Guidelines?
The International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), through a multidisciplinary panel of international advisors, developed the first comprehensive, evidence-based guidelines for optimizing the HIV care continuum, with an aim to increase HIV testing coverage, linkage to care, treatment coverage, engagement and retention in care, and viral suppression for adults and adolescents (see Fact Sheet 110).

The panel reviewed the scientific literature on the HIV care continuum and made recommendations in six subject areas:

- Optimizing the HIV care environment
- Increasing HIV testing coverage and linkage to care (Fact Sheet 112)

### Recommendations for Optimizing the HIV Care Environment:

**WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?**
The HIV care continuum describes how many people living with HIV know their status, engage in medical care, receive ART, and achieve undetectable HIV viral loads.

The IAPAC guidelines are the evidence-based recommendations to improve the care environment for PLHIV. In many places, laws criminalize people at risk of HIV or make it illegal to migrate to or live there. These guidelines recommend that such laws be repealed. Monitoring for and eliminating stigma and discrimination, especially in health care settings, is recommended. Enabling PLHIV to take responsibility for their care and community engagement across the care continuum is recommended.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**