

# Redefining and rediscovering client-centered HIV test counseling in a community-based setting

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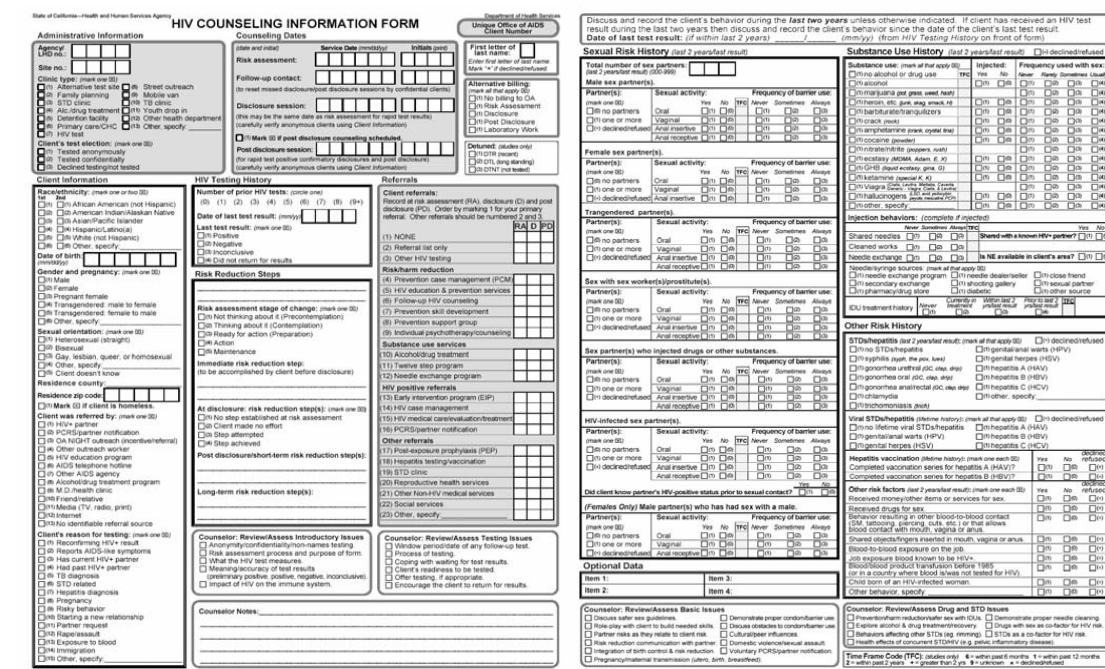
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By **REDEFINING** what happens in counseling sessions (removing paper-based data collection), we have been able to **REDISCOVER** that clients have a multitude of needs around HIV prevention, and have been better able to address their needs by having more time to devote to counseling.

## Redefining Data Collection: Key Points

- HIV test counselors working with high-risk, repeat-testing MSM require continuing education and supervision to enhance counseling skills.
- Funding for HIV counseling and testing through the California State Office of AIDS hinges on the completion of a client-level data form for each test.
- Site coordinators spend much of their time overseeing paperwork rather than providing support and training to counselors.
- Advent of oral fluid rapid testing forced a 20-minute counseling session which resulted in:
  - Diminished time devoted to counseling
  - Counselors using the data collection form as a counseling tool
  - Counseling often being limited to form-driven risk assessment

## What we took out:



## What we put in: PalmPal



Client level data is collected via Pocket PC on a client self-administered survey



All that paperwork: replaced by one device



7-inch touchscreen with audio, for a visually impaired or illiterate client

## Rediscovering the Counseling Relationship

- ✓ Counselors have embraced the new system, stating that it results in more satisfactory and effective counseling sessions.

Things counselors have said:

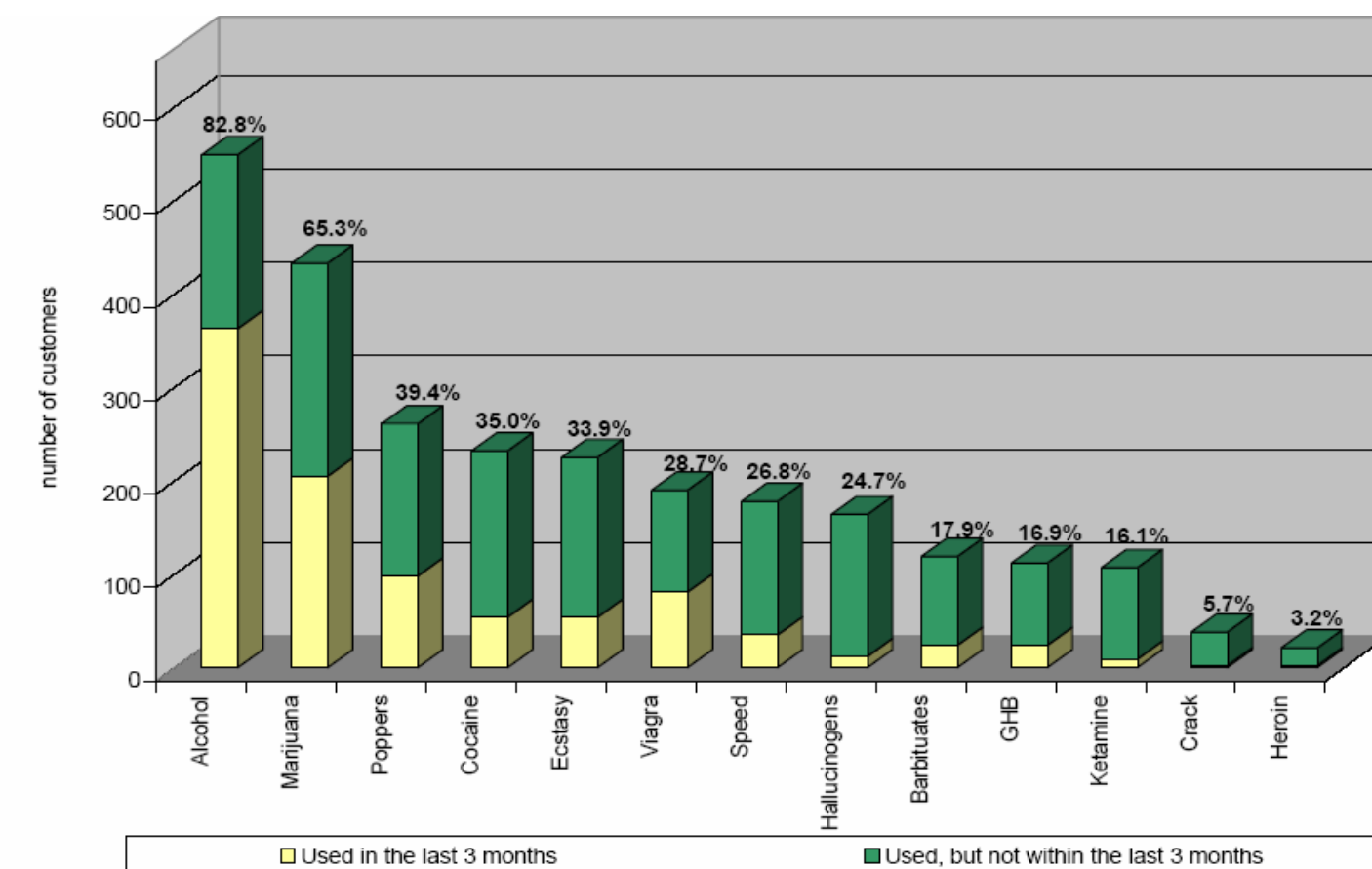
"I get to really understand what my client needs and have time to address their concerns."

"Customers are primed to talk about their risk, so doing a risk assessment is not as threatening."

- ✓ Excitement about the improved sessions has led to a counselor-driven call for more advanced training and collaborative support.
- ✓ Clients present a diversity of needs that extend beyond risk assessment.
- ✓ Eliminating time-intensive paperwork, allows the site coordinator to provide training and supervision.

Immediate access to data allows for more timely interventions and more appropriate population-based trainings. For example, self-reported substance use data can be surprising:

## Reported Drug Use History of HIV CTL Customers at Magnet Feb-Jun 06 (N=663)



Although speed use is often cited as a major problem and cause of increased HIV infection among gay men, our data show only about 1/4 of Magnet clients reported speed use. Use of cocaine, on the other hand, was much higher than expected.

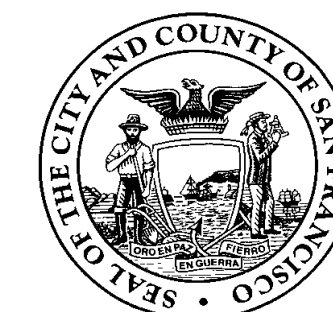
Clients are able to talk about why using condoms can be difficult and how they feel about that, rather than simply reporting their frequency of condom use.

Male sex partner(s).						
Partner(s):	Sexual activity:			Frequency of barrier use:		
(mark one <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	Yes	No	TFC	Never	Sometimes	Always
<input type="checkbox"/> (0) no partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (0)	6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (1) one or more	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (0)	6	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
<input type="checkbox"/> (+) declined/refused	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (0)	6	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (0)	6	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)

...becomes a conversation about the context.

## Recommendations

- Streamlined methods for collecting client-level data should be utilized, because they can help direct scarce time and resources into improved counselor training and supervision, thus improving the quality of client services.
- Separate data collection from the counseling experience as a way to enhance the level of counseling each client receives.
- Tailor data collection and interventions to best meet need of agency, community and client.



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