

# **Expansion of Couples HIV Counseling and Testing**

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# Counseling and Testing in PEPFAR

- High priority activity
  - Over 50 million CT sessions provided in first 5 years of PEPFAR
- Linking HIV positive individuals to care and treatment
- PEPFAR 2 legislation specifically mentions the importance of interventions with discordant couples

# Problem: Prevention impact of CT remains debated and unclear

- In treatment era, counselors are often focused on getting HIV+ clients into ART
- Medical approach in PITC = case finding
- Rapid testing and single session = shorter counseling
- Many clients only want testing and view risk assessment and lengthy counseling as intrusive and unnecessary
- **Partner notification is rare and not conducted in any systematic fashion**
- Prevention counseling may be neglected

# Prevention impact of VCT well documented for some groups

- Significant impact for individuals who test HIV+
  - Especially HIV+ women
- Behavioral outcomes with most evidence:
  - Reduction in unprotected sex
  - Increase in condom use, esp among discordant couples
  - Reduction in # of partners
  - Reduction in reported STIs
- Significant impact for sero-discordant co-habiting couples
  - Reduction in HIV incidence

# Why have we been slow to expand CHCT?

- Difficult intervention
  - Social, cultural, psychological barriers
  - Lack of training
  - Expansion of individual HCT difficult enough
- Many questions remain:
  - Who is our target group?
  - What are the critical services?
  - Where should CHCT be provided?
  - Who should provide CHCT?
  - When?
  - How frequently?

# Many questions remain

- Who is our target group?
- What are the critical services?
- Where should CHCT be provided?
- Who should provide CHCT?
- When should couples receive CHCT?
- How frequently?

# Basis for Expansion of CHCT

- Mandate
  - PEPFAR 2 Legislation
- Evidence for Prevention Effectiveness
  - Science based intervention
- Technical Assistance from experts
  - Needs assessment
  - Strategic planning
  - Training
  - Mentoring