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DATE 11 June 1996

TO/DEST. Coordinator, Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Acting Medical Officer of Health

SUBJECT/OBJET **RESPONSE TO CSC MOTION NO. 12:
ANONYMOUS TESTING**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

At the January 18, 1996 Committee meeting, Councillor Munter asked that staff report back on the feasibility of the RMOC expanding the availability of anonymous HIV testing at its own facilities.

AVAILABILITY OF ANONYMOUS TESTING IN OTTAWA-CARLETON

Anonymous HIV testing has been offered in Ottawa-Carleton since January, 1992. This programme is under the direction of the Ottawa-Carleton Council on AIDS. Provincial legislation had designated five testing centres which are: 1) Sandy Hill Community Health Centre; 2) Centretown Community Health Centre; 3) Somerset West Community Health Centre; 4) the STD Clinic (now the Sexual Health Centre); and the SITE Needle Exchange Program. In the beginning, testing was performed by a coordinator at four sites. The SITE program was not a testing site at that point. (See graph at Annex A).

During the first two years, HIV testing was done on an appointment basis only for all sites and through outreach on an ad hoc basis. Individuals interested in anonymous testing would call the AIDS/Sexual Health Information Line to book an appointment. Hours of operation varied from morning, afternoons and some evenings. During the first two years, there was quite a significant waiting period for an appointment. Callers could wait for two - three weeks in order to get an appointment.

In 1994, walk-in clinics were established at the Sexual Health Centre and Sandy Hill Health Centre. This allowed a wider range of options for individuals wanting to be tested. Testing was still done by appointment and the AIDS/Sexual Health Information Line still provided that service as well as initial screening and basic counselling. At that same time, volunteers were trained to assist the testing coordinator with reception services, counselling and testing. At the same time, the Somerset West Community Health Centre walk-in clinic became an autonomous testing site in July of 1994. In May, 1995, the SITE Needle Exchange Program became an autonomous testing site offering HIV testing at the fixed site and in the van. Anonymous testing is the only HIV testing option available through the SITE.

The anonymous testing program recently received one time funding of \$80,000 to establish an outreach component (the Network) for recovery homes, shelters and related agencies. Staff of these agencies will be trained to offer HIV education, testing, counselling and accompaniment to the laboratory. This program is just getting underway.

With these recent modifications, there is no longer a waiting period for anonymous testing. Hours of operation are flexible as clinics are open mornings, afternoons and evenings five days a week and on weekends through the SITE program. Both the SITE and the Network make the testing more accessible to populations who might not access clinic settings. Testing is available in a variety of settings as well as by appointment or on a walk-in basis. Staff at the AIDS/Sexual Health Information Line continue to provide support to the program by remaining the central location for callers to get information on testing and for organizing appointments and schedules.

Promotion for the anonymous HIV testing is done through four different venues. Advertising is done regularly in community papers. Promotion for testing is also done at special events and presentations. Thirdly, anonymous testing cards and posters are widely distributed in community health centres, community resource centres, pharmacies, recreational facilities as well as the drop-in centres, bath houses and recovery homes where HIV testing and counselling are offered. Promotion for testing is also done by the HIV Prevention Program during community presentations and education forums.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to this report.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This report has been written in consultation with the Anonymous Testing Program and presented to the Ottawa-Carleton Council on AIDS.

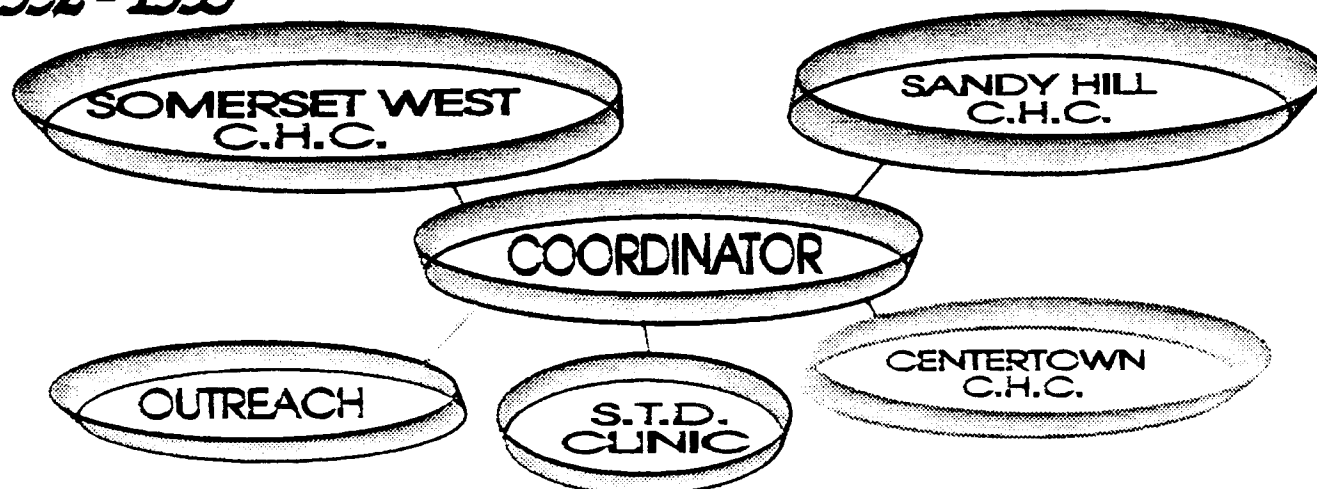
CONCLUSION

At this time, there does not seem to be a need to expand the anonymous testing program. The Region has two additional autonomous sites funded through existing budgets. The new outreach component will soon be in place. The needs for the residents of Ottawa-Carleton are being met through the variety of locations, hours and settings presently in place. The impression of service providers is that all those who wish this option are able to access it with a minimum of delay.

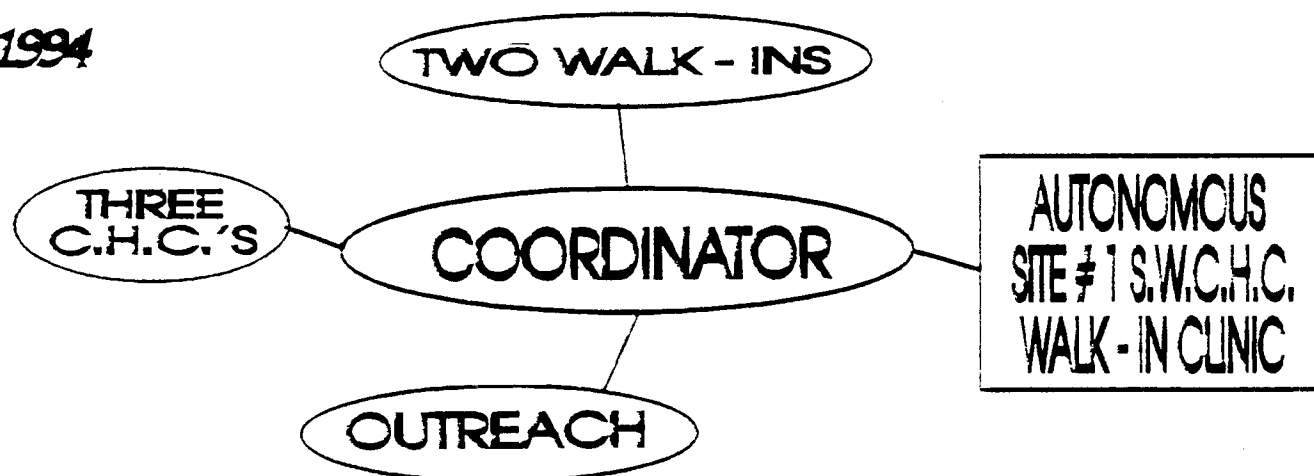
Approved by

*G. C. Dunkley
A/Medical Officer of Health*

ANONIMOUS HIV TESTING OTTAWA - CARLETON 1992 - 1993



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