AIDS Regional Information and Evaluation System (ARIES)

What Is ARIES?

The AIDS Regional Information and Evaluation System (ARIES) is an HIV/AIDS web-based computer system that is used by agencies who receive HIV/AIDS money from the State and Federal government (through the Ryan White CARE Act). Agencies who receive money from the CARE Act must keep track of the clients they see and the services they provide to those clients; ARIES helps agencies carry out this task. By entering information into ARIES, it will be easier for the agencies you see to plan and manage your care.

To Share Or Not To Share?

You will be able to choose whether or not you want the agencies you see for services to share your information with each other. When making your decision you need to consider the benefits of sharing your information vs. not sharing your information. Once you make your decision, you will need to sign the *ARIES Share/Non-share Form*.

What Are The Benefits Of Share VS. Non-Share?

You have the choice to either share your data or not share your data between agencies. When you first go to an agency for services, they will ask you if you want to share your data.

> *Choosing the Share Status*
> If you agree to share your information with other agencies, ARIES will help you get services more easily. While you will still have to go through the normal client intake process the first time you go to an agency for services, ARIES may cut down the amount of paperwork you need to fill out when you go to other agencies for services. This will also help agencies work together to provide you with the services you need. You will have to sign a form at each agency to let them know that you agree to share your information, but you won't need to complete most of the same forms more than once. By sharing, you won't have to give the same basic information like address, phone number, race, etc., over and over again to each agency. The system works best for you if you choose to share your information because the registration process will be easier when you go to more than one agency for services. Important: **only the agencies you go to for**

services will be able to see your information. Agencies that you have never visited for services will never see your information.

Choosing the Non-Share Status
If you decide not to share your information with other agencies, you will still need to sign a form when you first come to an agency for services. You will need to provide all of your information each and every time you go to a new agency - just like you do now. You will also have to give each and every agency your most recent information each time you go in for services.

You have the right to change your mind about sharing your information at any time. If you choose not to share your information at first, but later decide you do want to share your information, all you have to do is tell your provider. They will ask you to sign a new consent form. The appropriate agency staff can then go into ARIES and indicate that you have changed your mind and would like to share your information. If you change from share to non-share, the information collected from that date forward will not be shared.

It is important to note that regardless of your share or non-share choice, fiscal agents and public health departments may see your data to meet their funding and reporting requirements. Your confidentiality is always safe in these instances. No identifying information, such as your name and social security number, will be released, published or used against you without your consent, except as allowed by law or to ensure compliance with policy.

What Does Sharing My Information Mean? How Does It Work?

If you choose to share your data, you must sign a form that says you are allowing that agency to share your information with other agencies you go to for services. Only agencies you see for services can view your information. When you go to an agency for the first time, they will ask you if you have already received services from an agency that uses ARIES.   If you have already been to an agency that uses ARIES and you are a share client, your information will come up on the computer after you give the agency some important information. In ARIES, this information is called the *client keys*. These keys are important because there are certain letters and numbers from each of the keys that make up a unique client ID for you. This client ID is how ARIES tracks you in the system. The client keys consist of the following:

1) First Name,
2) Middle Initial,
3) Last Name,
4) Date of Birth,

5) Gender, and
6) Mother's Maiden Name.

Once the computer finds your record, you won't have to give your information all over again when you go to a new agency for services that also uses ARIES. You must remember your client keys the exact same way each time you go into an agency. For example, if you go to one agency for services and you tell them your name is Bob but later go into a different agency for services and tell them your name is Robert, ARIES will not be able to find you in the system. ***You must use the same "keys" at all agencies where you receive services***. If your keys are not the same, ARIES will create more than one record for you in the system, thus making it harder for agencies to correctly identify and serve you.

Why Does ARIES Use Mother's Maiden Name?

ARIES uses mother's maiden name simply because it's specific to you and easy for you to remember. It's in no way related to your banking and/or financial records. In addition, ARIES only stores the first and third letter of your mother's maiden name—not the entire name—as a way to uniquely identify you in the system. If your mother's maiden name is Jones, for example, only the letter J and the letter N would be stored in ARIES as part of your *client keys.*

Client keys are important because they make you unique in ARIES. Providers use these six pieces of information to look you up in the system. This ensures that each agency looks up **YOUR** data in ARIES and doesn't get you mixed up with other clients. The federal government branch called the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) first came up with the idea of a unique client identifier. HRSA used: first name, last name, date of birth and gender. This client identifier, however, did not prove to be as *unique* as they had hoped particularly in large states like California, Texas, and New York who have a large number of people living in one state. To make sure the client identifiers or keys are unique to you, it was necessary to add on other pieces of information; thus, mother's maiden name and middle initial were added.

Furthermore, only certain employees at the provider agency are allowed to see your client keys in ARIES. If one of these employees pulls up your client keys, ARIES will not show them the mother's maiden name. ARIES always hides MMN.

Is My Information Safe?

Your information is **very** safe in ARIES. In fact, your information is more secure in ARIES than your on-line banking information! The California State Office of AIDS (OA) must approve each staff person before he or she is allowed to go into ARIES.

Each staff person is given a "digital certificate" before they can go into the system. The digital certificate is linked to their own name and password. The digital certificate also checks to make sure that provider staff are using State approved computers. This means that staff who use ARIES cannot get into ARIES from any computer they want to. For example, they cannot go to a public library to get into ARIES. OA does not approve computers that are used in public places. This is not true of Internet banking systems: banks allow you to access your information from any computer as long as you know the user name and password. But for ARIES, only specific approved computers and approved staff will be allowed to use ARIES.

Once staff have been approved to use ARIES, they are given permission to view very specific information - only the specific information they need to know about you. Information such as mental health, substance use, legal issues are available to a very limited and approved group. This information is never shared between agencies in ARIES, even if you have agreed to share your information.

ARIES also uses encryption when storing your information. This means that the information that identifies you in ARIES (for example, your six client keys mentioned earlier as well as your address, telephone number, etc.) are jumbled or scrambled in the system. Only certain approved users have the keys to unscramble the data. Encryption is also used to scramble information as it travels across the Internet. If hackers try to get your information as it travels across the Internet lines, they would not be able to read any information since it is scrambled.

ARIES also uses firewalls to protect your information. A firewall is a piece of computer software used to prevent hackers from getting into or seeing system information. ARIES uses three firewalls to ensure your data is stored safely.

Who Can I Call If I Have More Questions?

You may contact you local provider agency if you have more questions or concerns about collecting and storing your information in ARIES.

You can also read more about ARIES by visiting the California State Office of AIDS' website at: http://www.dhs.ca.gov/aids/Programs/ARIES/default.htm or http://projectaries.org