Caracon Symposium 2025

The Fight Isn’t Over

October 13–17

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We are Greater Cincinnati's HIV nonprofit devoted to positively changing lives in the fight against HIV through:

Prevention

Promoting health and well-being in at-risk communities through evidence-based approaches to prevent disease and reduce the spread of HIV

Housing

Offering a variety of permanent housing support to prevent homelessness and to stabilize individuals living with HIV and their families

Care

Helping individuals living with HIV access the health care they need through medical case management and pharmacy services

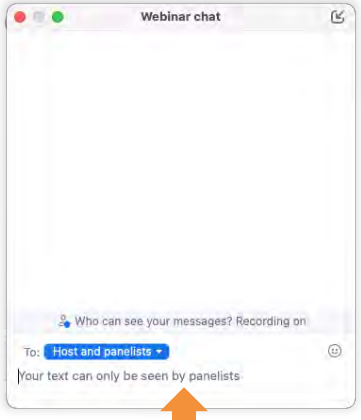
Learn more: caracole.org

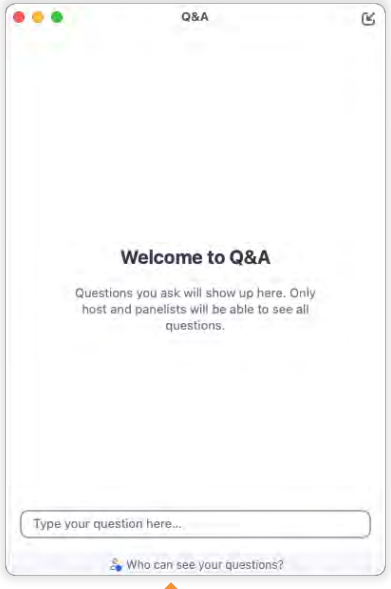
AETC AIDS Education & Training Center Program Midwest

Caracon Symposium 2025

How to Use Zoom Webinar

Use Chat to converse with everyone on the webinar and for tech issue questions.





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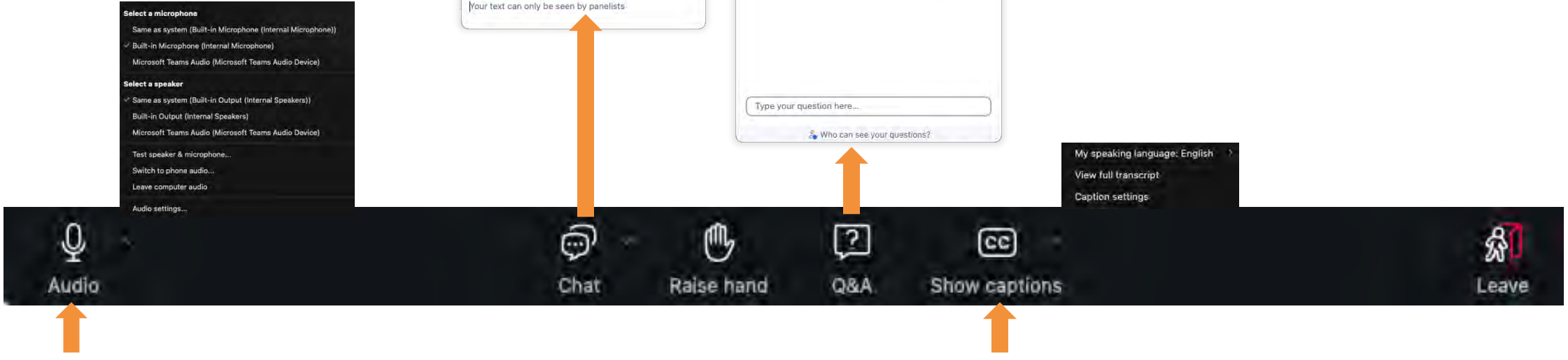

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Caption Settings

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Special thanks to our presenting partners:

MATEC
MIDWEST AIDS TRAINING + EDUCATION CENTER

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Evaluations and Credits

Evaluations recommended for all attendees

Required for CECs

- Link in today's chat and as a post-webinar pop-up
- Must be completed by end of business day (5:00 PM ET) today

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Caracon Symposium 2025
Thursday, October 16

From Exam Rooms to Living Rooms: The Shift Toward HIV Self-Testing

Presenters: JeMarr Jackson, CDCA and Josh Skowron

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From Exam Rooms to Living Rooms: The Shift Toward HIV Self-Testing

Caracole HIV Self-Testing (HIVST) Program

- FREE service for clients to receive in person and online ordering.
- Launched in November 2022 through a year-long grant from the CDC Foundation.
- Starting in 2024, Caracole self-funded the program and saw a huge uptick in demand.
- Through in person outreach and mail-in orders, we have distributed over 2,500 test kits mainly throughout the Greater Cincinnati region: Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky.

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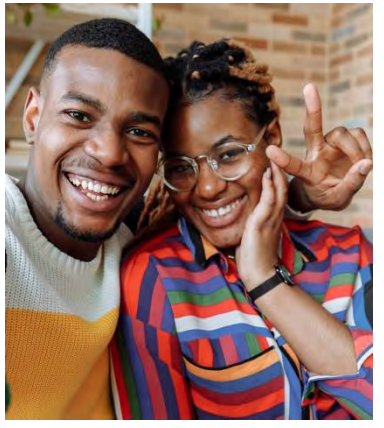
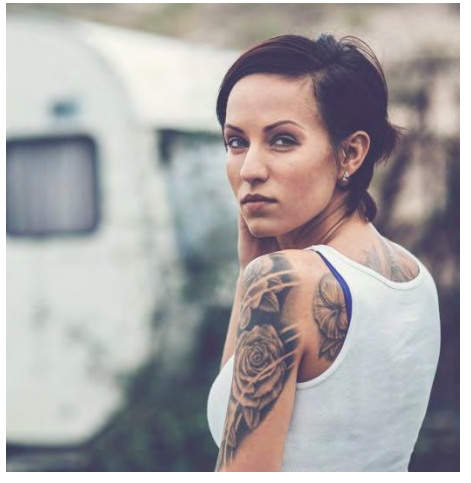
Understanding Our Reach

Who Used HIVST in Our Community

While clients may choose how they identify, the largest group receiving test kits identified as:

- Heterosexual (50%)
- LGBTQ (27%)
- People who inject drugs (13%), and
- Those who declined or selected ‘other’ (10%)





Data range is November 2022–September 2025

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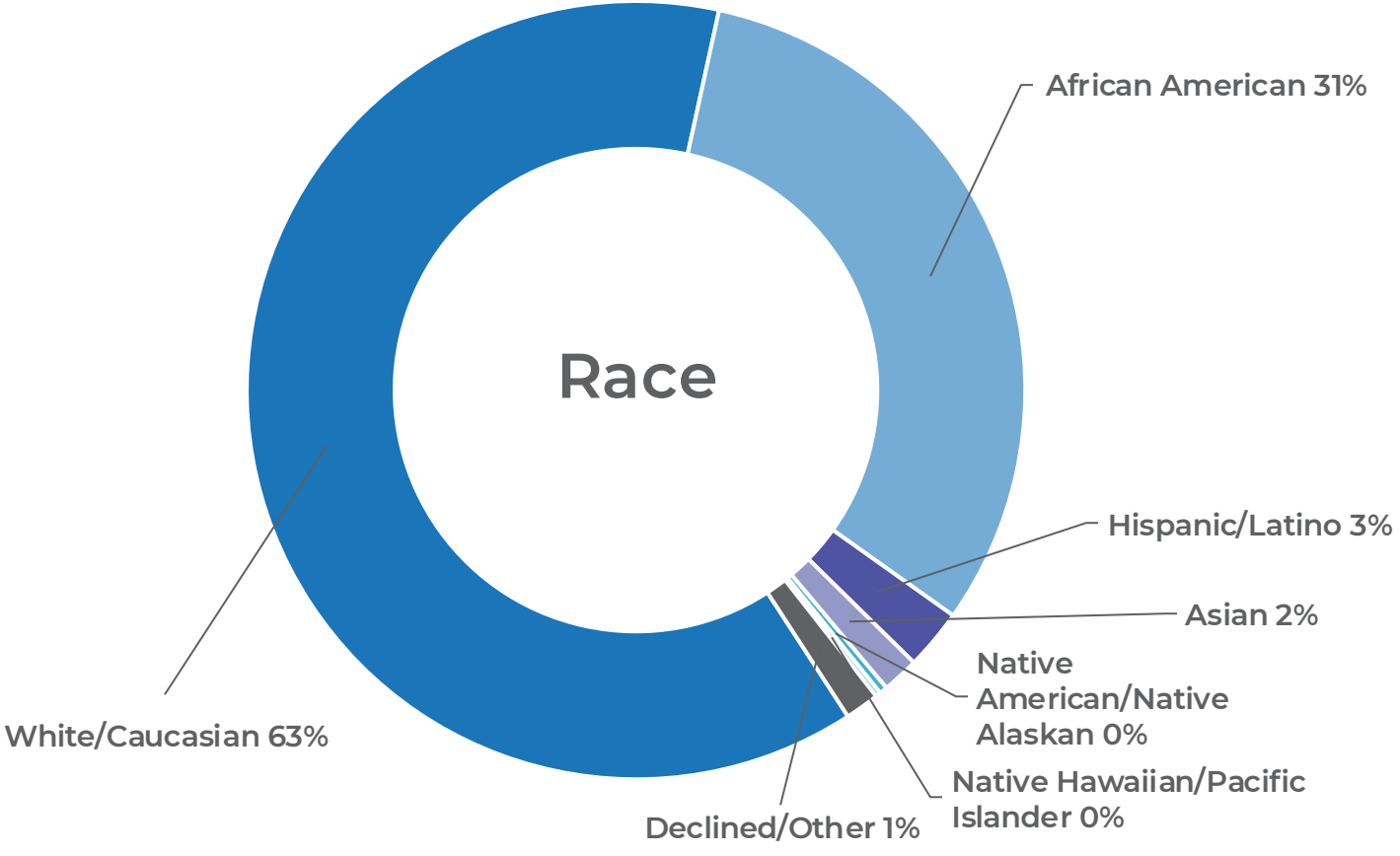
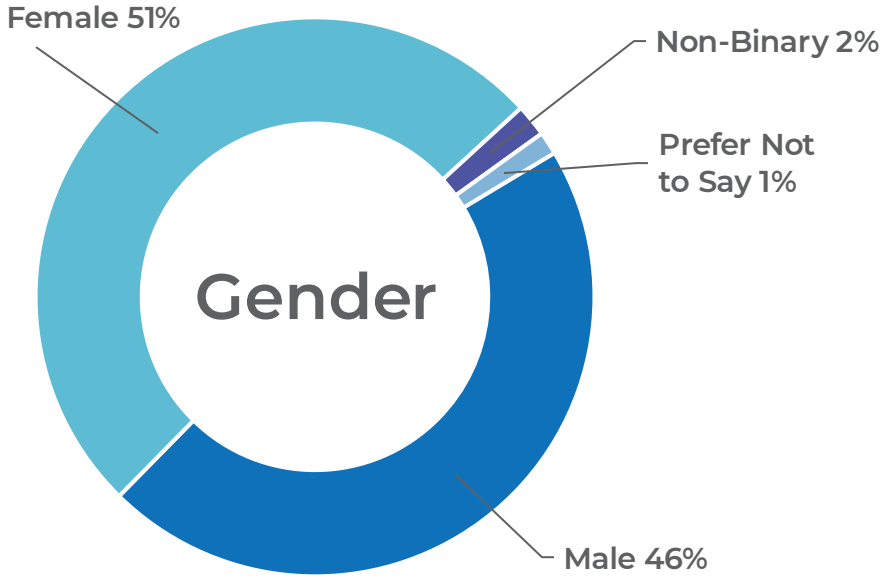
Caracole HIVST Program

Outreach Distribution Data





AGE

13-24	4%
25-34	35%
35-44	39%
45-54	15%
55+	7%

Data range is November 2022–September 2025

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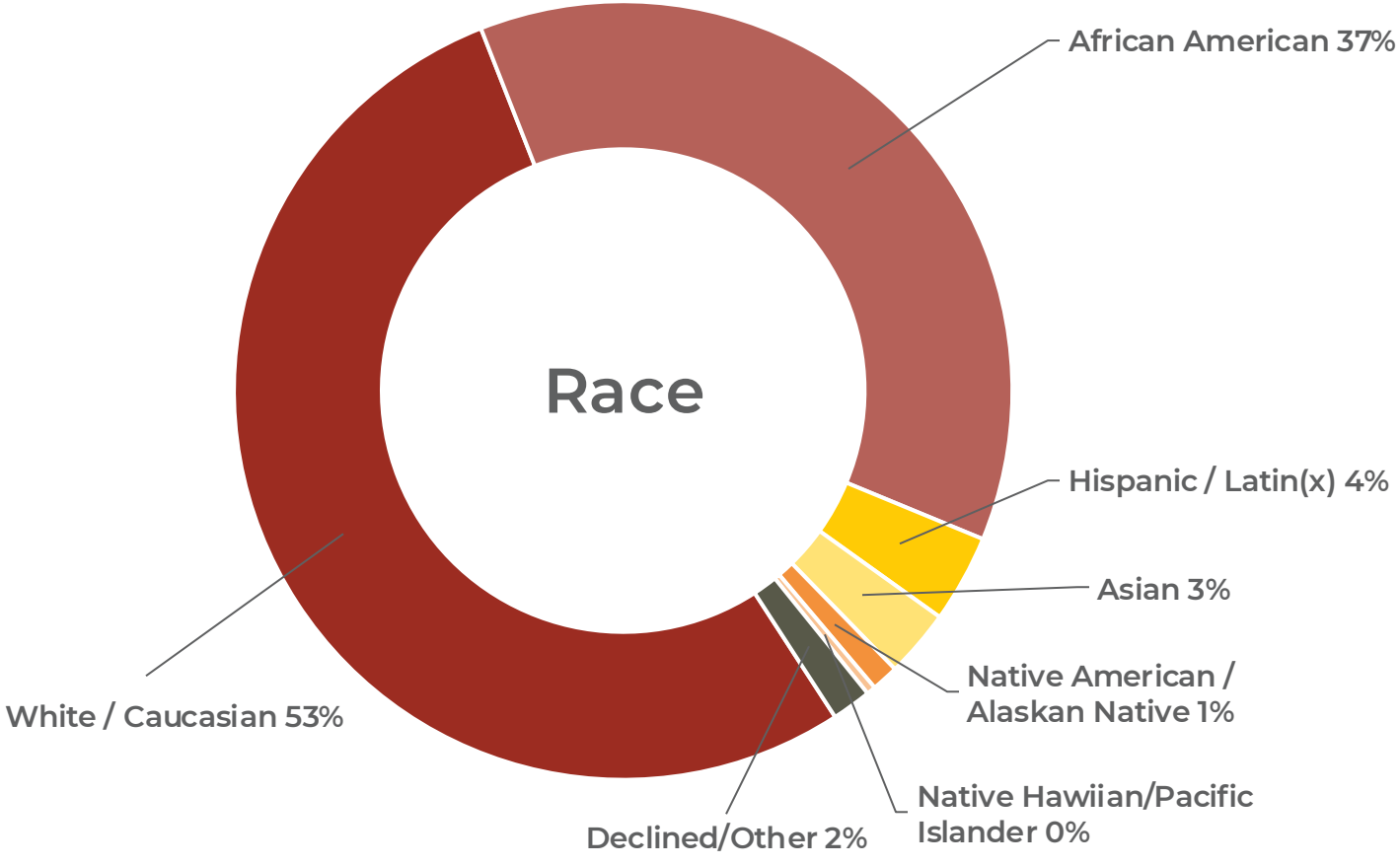
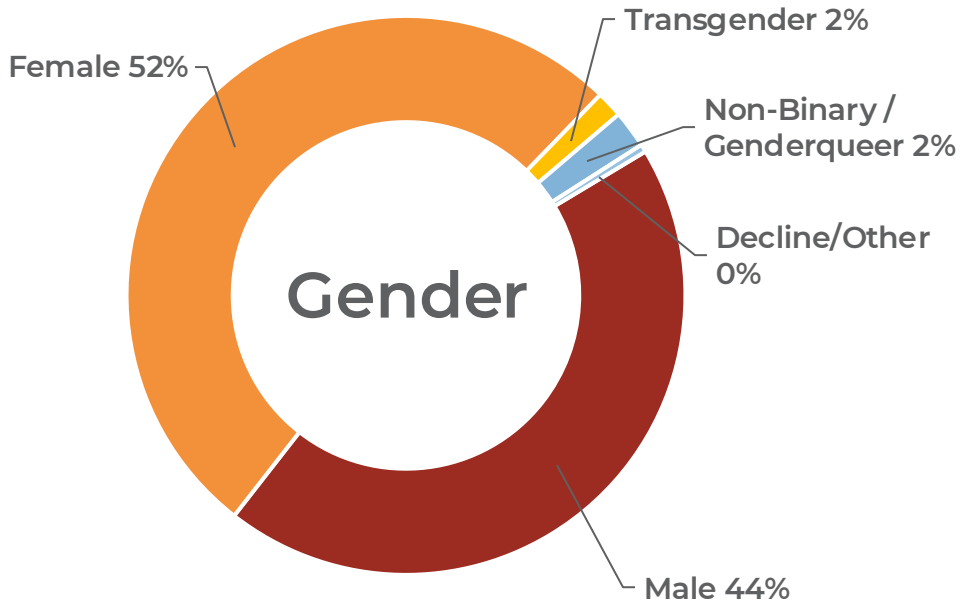
Mail-In Order Distribution Data





STATE	
Ohio	89%
Kentucky	8%
Indiana	3%

Data range is November 2022–September 2025

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Caracole HIVST Program

Data Collection: Then vs. Now

2022–2023
CDC Foundation-funded

- Required:
  - Name
  - Age/birthday
  - Gender
  - Zip code
  - Contact information
  - Risk factors

2024–present
Self-funded

- Required:
  - Zip code
  - Age range
- Optional:
  - Contact information

Result

Requiring **less information led to higher uptake**—more clients took test kits when we asked for minimal information.

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Caracole HIVST Program

Why People Self-Test

Purpose

- Most use HIVST for preventive testing
- In-person testing is more common after higher-risk situations

Comfort & Control

- COVID-19 normalized self-testing for many
- People feel more comfortable testing themselves privately

Cost & Convenience

- Rising healthcare costs make self-testing an affordable option
- Mail-in orders increase access at no cost to clients

Privacy & Discretion

- Bar outreach works best when kits are available discreetly
- People prefer picking up kits themselves vs. being handed one directly

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Caracole HIVST Program

Making HIVST Simple and Reliable

Quick & Easy

- FDA-approved OraQuick single-use oral test
- Uses a simple mouth swab — no needles or blood
- Results in 20 minutes
- Long shelf life — up to 2 years before expiration

What's Included

- Step-by-step instruction sheet
- Safer sex kit
- PrEP info (for negative results)
- Newly diagnosed resources (for positive results)
- Caracole staff contact information and "Next Steps" card no matter their result

Why People Like It

- Pain-free and noninvasive
- Fast, accurate and private
- Feels easier and more efficient than blood testing

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Caracole HIVST Program

Demand Beyond Ohio

- Our mail-in HIVST program supports people who live in the Greater Cincinnati tristate area (Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana)
- Marketing has expanded reach to different populations in multiple cities and states
- People from Pennsylvania, Georgia, Mississippi, Virginia and Illinois have requested test kits
  - Staff connect clients to local programs when available
  - If no local services exist, Caracole ships kits at no cost
- Many people from unsupported areas lack access to HIV self-testing, but it shows that it is in very high demand among those groups of people.

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Caracole HIVST Program

Partners Expand Reach and Access

- Partnered with other organizations to expand reach
- OraQuick hotline available 24/7 for questions, concern or results
- Word of mouth is the most effective way to reach new clients
- Collecting minimal client info makes kit distribution tracking easier and helps staff keep up with important data related to distribution
- Partnering with bars and social events increases demand and awareness
- Provides clients with autonomous, private testing options

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The Future of HIV Self-Testing

From Innovation to Everyday Practice

- Marketing data and client demand show HIV testing is becoming self-driven
- Clients gain control over their sexual health and status from home
- In-person testing remains important, but self-testing empowers clients in a less stigmatizing way
- Success of HIVST program enabled a pilot STI self-testing program
- Highlights growing demand for accessible, client-centered testing

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From Exam Rooms to Living Rooms: The Shift Toward HIV Self-Testing

From Clinic to Click

Traditional HIV testing models depend on access. At-home testing depends on autonomy.

Clinic Era

High Friction, Low Privacy

- Requires time, transport, disclosure
- Feels medical, not personal
- Only reaches those already engaged

Click Era

Private, Fast, On Demand

- 72% of young adults prefer self-managed health
- 38% of high-risk adults avoid testing due to privacy concerns
- +60% of first-time testers prefer home testing to in-person testing

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From Exam Rooms to Living Rooms: The Shift Toward HIV Self-Testing

National Momentum

TOGETHER TAKEMEHOME

mistr

LetsGet Checked

care+

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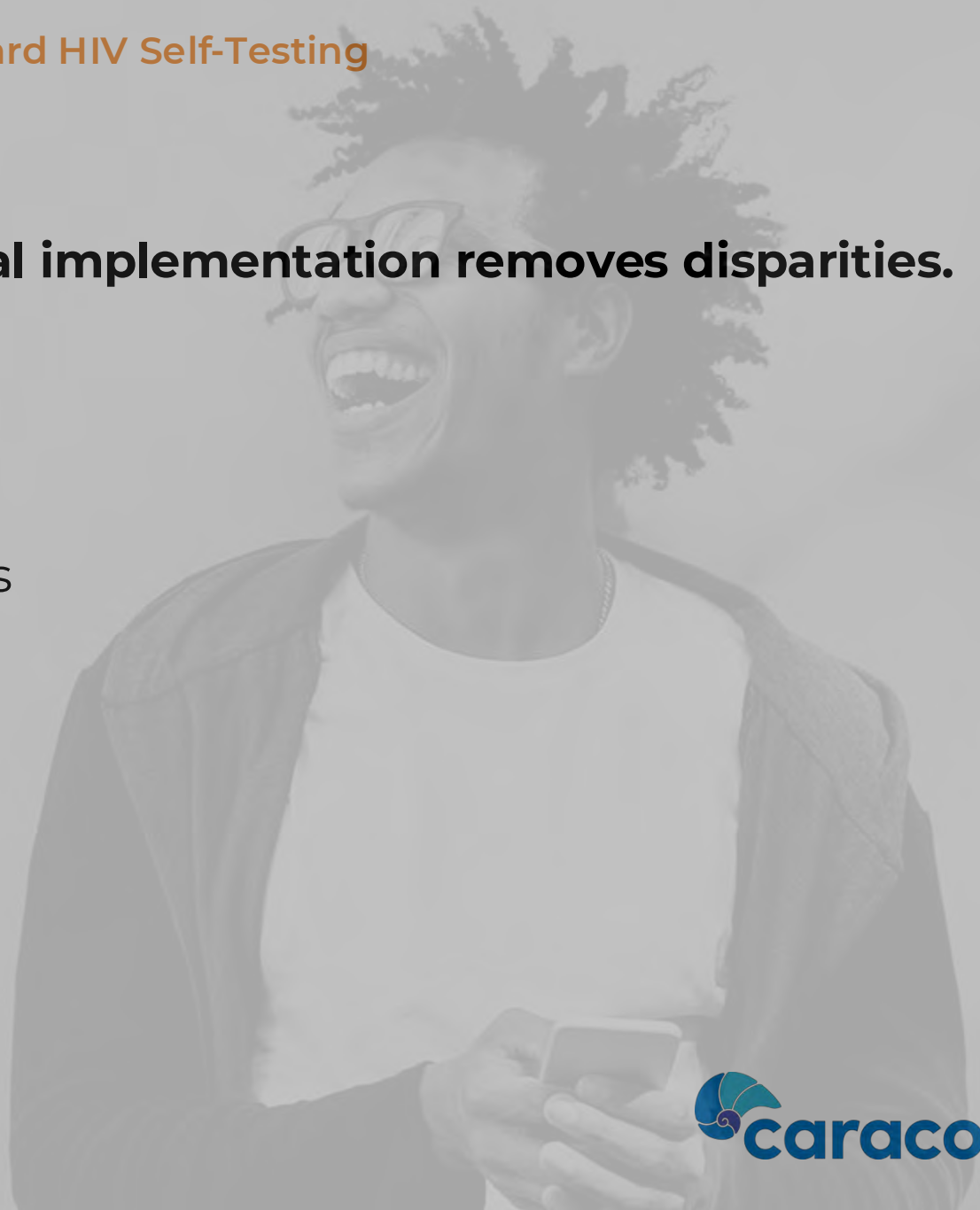
Local Acceleration

National programs remove barriers. Local implementation removes disparities.

- Removes financial gatekeeping
- Offers real-person support
- Reaches people with housing insecurities
- Turns testing into connection
- Transforms data into equity



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From Exam Rooms to Living Rooms: The Shift Toward HIV Self-Testing

Local Acceleration—Caracole's Program

Scale of Access

2,500+ HIV self-test kits distributed since launch—doubling last year's total.

Rapid Adoption

97 % year-over-year increase in online kit orders, achieved entirely through local initiative.

Geographic Reach

40+ ZIP codes served across Greater Cincinnati.

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Caracole HIVST Program Marketing

HIVST Campaign Overview

Raise awareness of our HIV self-testing (HIVST) services through paid media

Audiences

- Black/African American men who have sex with men (MSM), age ranges 13–34
  - Including people who use drugs (PWUD)
- Black/African American transgender individuals, age ranges 13-34
  - Including PWUD
- Black/African American women, age ranges 13-34
  - Including PWUD

Tactics

- Digital Marketing
  - Meta
  - Gay Ad Network
  - Google
- Out of Home
  - Billboards
  - Broadcast & Streaming
  - Transit
- Print Collateral
  - Posters
  - Palm Cards

Goal

- Increase in visitors to landing page on caracole.org
- Increase in number of self-test kits ordered

Promise

- “Your Health. Your way.” Self-testing as a confident, private act—not a secret.

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Addressing Barriers

We built the campaign backward—from the barriers out.

Barrier	Insight	Strategic Response
Stigma and judgment in clinical spaces	People feared being seen, labeled, or misunderstood.	Shifted the entire campaign tone to *affirmation over instruction*. Testing framed as **self-care**, not suspicion.
Privacy concerns and mistrust of systems	"I don't want anyone to know I'm testing."	Built messaging around **control, confidentiality, and autonomy**—a test you own, not one done to you.
Limited time and convenience	Work, transportation, and clinic hours created invisible barriers.	Made testing **frictionless and on-demand**—mobile-first, fast, discreet
Uneven cultural representation	Audiences didn't see themselves in prevention materials	Centered **Black, Latino, MSM, and trans identities**

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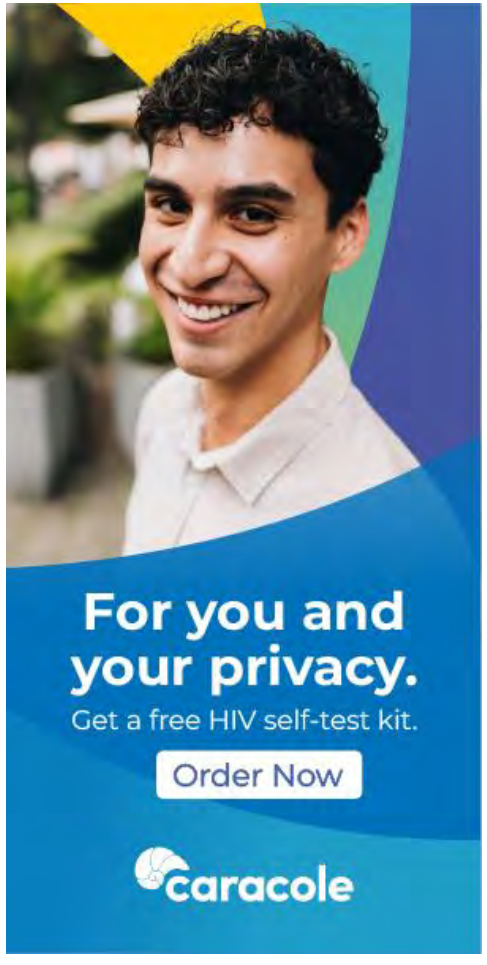
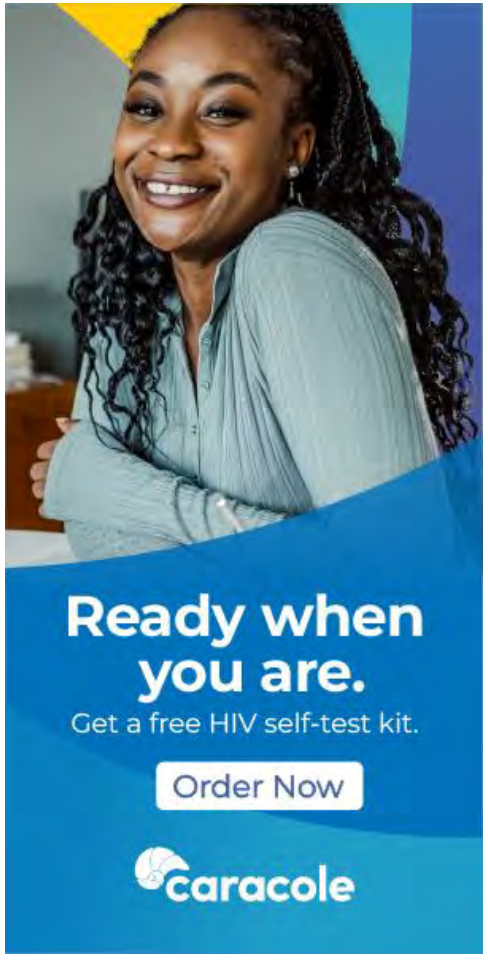
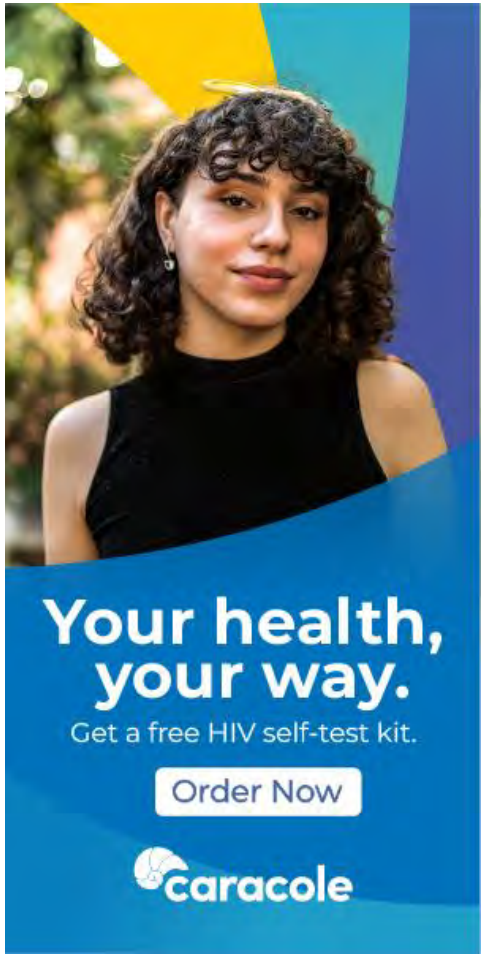
Caracole HIVST Program Marketing

What Did We Say?







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Key Insight + Messaging

Testing is prioritized when it's on your terms.

Strategy	Key Message	Purpose/Behavioral Role
Put all control in their hands	**"Ready when you are."**	Shifts power to the audience. Testing becomes on-demand, not prescribed. Normalizes self-testing as everyday self-care.
Respect autonomy	**"Do it on your terms."**	Reframes testing from obligation to autonomy. Reduces anxiety through privacy and choice.
Speak to empowerment and highlight respect	**"Your health, your way."**	Establishes dignity and ownership. Resonates across diverse cultural contexts without a judgmental tone.
Assure empowerment and confidentiality	**For you and your privacy.**	Closes the emotional loop—safety and self-efficacy coexist. Builds long-term trust.

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Connecting Autonomy to Access

A multi-channel system to meet people where they are

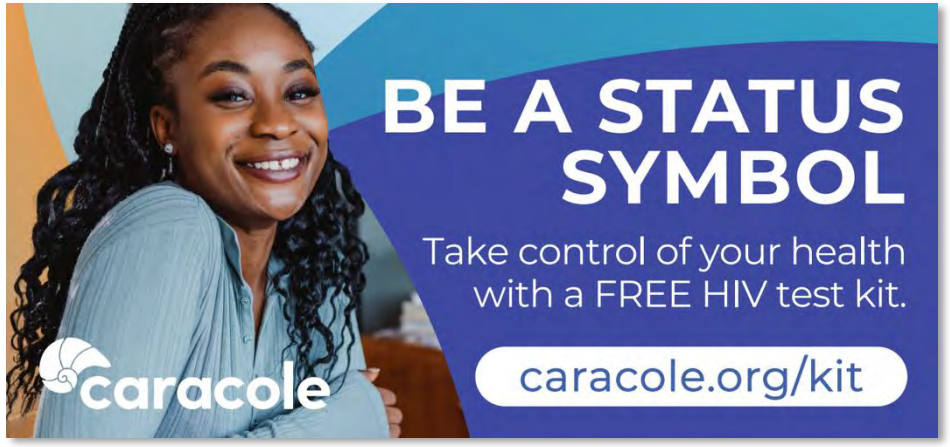
- Strategy aligned message, placement, and experience to the insight that testing happens on their terms.
- Combined traditional and digital media to move audiences from awareness to action.
- Traditional channels normalized self-testing in public spaces; digital channels enabled private, frictionless engagement.
- Each medium had a defined role—OOH and radio built social permission; digital and search captured and converted intent.
- Media worked as a coordinated ecosystem, not a set of placements.

Caracole HIVST Program Marketing

HIV Self-Testing Seen

Out-of-home and radio reframed testing as normal, visible and local

- Five billboards, three buses, and 13 bus shelters across high-prevalence Hamilton County ZIPs
- Stigma-free language: “Your Health. Your Way.”
- Placements near transit, retail, and community hubs with low clinic testing.
- Local and streaming radio extended reach into commuting and working-class audiences.
- Visibility build permission—testing became part of everyday life.



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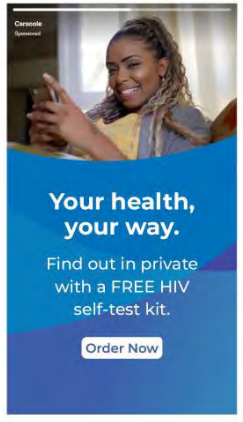

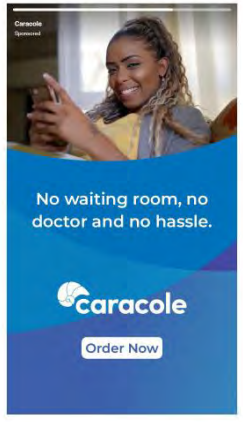

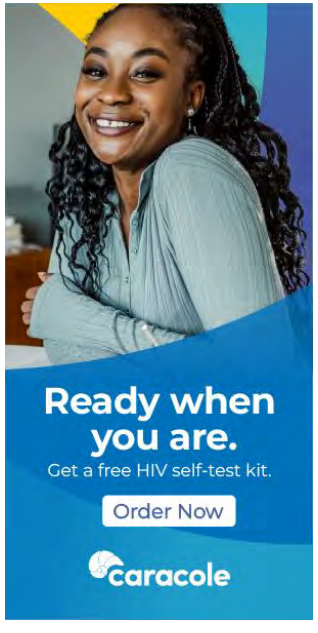

Caracole HIVST Program Marketing

Autonomy to Action

Digital channels converted privacy and control into measurable engagement

- Active across Meta, Google, YouTube, and Grindr
- Empowering tone, “Ready when you are”
- Targeting high-intent users through search and behavioral cues.
- Retargeting to convert passive interest into testing orders.

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Caracole HIVST Program Marketing

From Awareness to Action

Paid media built a measurable pathway from exposure to sustained engagements.

- 21.9 million total impressions (20M traditional, 1.9M digital)
- 31,000+ landing page sessions (8x YoY growth)
- 46% lower cost-per-click from previous campaign
- 21.4% of all visitors engaged with the program

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