



Ending the Syndemic (ETS) Committee Meeting Summary 21 June 2023



Date:	21 June 2023	Start Time:	12:30 p.m.	End Time:	1:42 p.m.
Chair:	Roberta Stewart	DPH Liaison:	Gina D'Angelo	Location:	Zoom
Attendees:	Refer to page 6	Recorder:	Mark Nickel		

RESULTS

1. The committee members approved by consensus the May committee meeting summary.
2. The committee chair did a progress check on planned v. actual performance as it relates to the committee's 2023 Work Plan. The Committee work remains on schedule.
3. Representatives of the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) Syndemic Partners Group shared updates on current and future areas of focus related to the committee.
4. The committee reviewed updated content and graphic design layout for the routine HIV testing toolkit and provided feedback on the patient and provider flyers.

ACTION ITEMS

- Mark Nickel will draft a meeting summary. Participants will review the draft meeting summary and provide any additions or corrections.
- Patient and provider flyers from the routine HIV testing toolkit will be sent to meeting participants. Individuals will provide any additional feedback by the following week.
- Gina D'Angelo will share input from the meeting with the marketing campaign and monitor progress on the development of final products for the routine HIV testing toolkit.
- The committee will assemble in August.

CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Committee chair Roberta Stewart called to order the meeting at 12:30 p.m. She introduced Gina D'Angelo, the CT DPH resource liaison and subject matter expert who provides technical assistance to the committee.

Ms. Stewart briefly described the charge of the committee to support the development, adoption, and scaling of prevention and care strategies relevant to ending the HIV epidemic and other related epidemics of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), Hepatitis (Hep), and substance use disorders (SUDs). Participants shared their names and their organizational affiliation or town or residence.

Participants shared their names, preferred pronouns, and affiliation with an organization or community. Special welcomes were extended to:

- Lara Cushman a new CT DPH epidemiologist
- Kerry Ellington who leads community engagement at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

Danielle Warren Dias noted the rebranding that is occurring at Connecticut Children's, specifically Danielle is affiliated with the Youth and Family Community Health Program.

CONSENSUS APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING SUMMARY

The committee members approved by consensus the May meeting summary with no additions or corrections.

UPDATES FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Ms. Stewart stated that she did not have any committee chair updates.



PROGRESS CHECK: 2023 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The committee members reviewed a screen share of the 2023 Work Plan and recognized that the committee remains on schedule.

COORDINATING ENDING THE HIV EPIDEMIC ACTIVITIES

CT DPH Update

Gina D'Angelo shared that the following updates:

- The Syndemic Partners Group met in late May and provided several suggestions to improve the Syndemic Screener. These will be shared during the discussion for that agenda item.
- Legislative policy changes will be enacted soon for Hepatitis screening (October) and the roll-out of a PrEP and PEP Drug Assistance Program (DAP).
- Implementation continues for the TEST CT! campaign across multiple CT DPH programs (e.g., STD/STI, Hepatitis, HIV) with streaming, social media, banner ads on Facebook and Instagram.
 - Stephen Feathers indicated that he had seen an ad on either Samsung TV+ or Hulu

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Gina D'Angelo shared that:

- The next meeting of the Connecticut Sexual Health Coalition will occur on July 27th. It will be a virtual check-in meeting and the group will review goal statements drafted at the May meeting.

Hepatitis

Venesha Heron shared that:

- The CT DPH website has been updated with information about routine HIV testing and new information about changes in the Hepatitis testing laws.
- The Viral Hepatitis Elimination Technical Advisory Committee will meet on August 24, 2023. The group continues to recruit members and is developing a statewide elimination plan.
- The statewide Hepatitis testing event held in May resulted in an increased collaboration with 21 agencies hosting testing events. Planning has begun for this event in 2024.

CIRA

Daniel Davidson shared:

- CIRA will host an event on Data Integration, Equity, and Ethics on July 10th. He will send out additional information through the CHPC list serv.

Substance Use Disorders and Mental Health

No update was shared.

ROUTINE HIV TESTING TOOLKIT DEVELOPMENT

Gina D'Angelo shared some draft content from the marketing contractors working on developing the routine HIV testing toolkit.

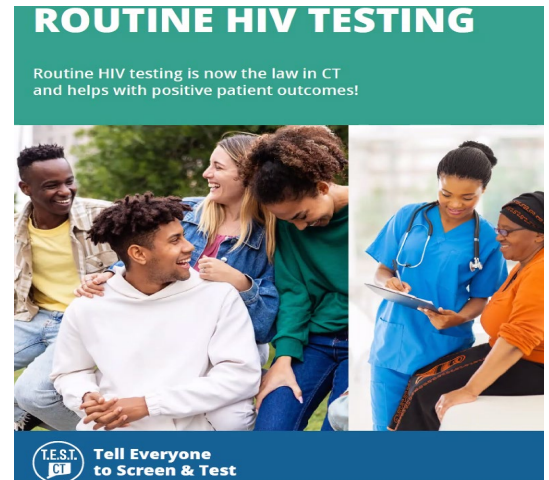
- The health provider toolkit package will include a 9" x 12" pocket folder with two (2) trifold brochures, one

(1) 12-page information booklet, and three (3) to five (2) double-sided, one-sheet flyers.

- The folder will include a letter from the CT DPH Commissioner.
- The information will be made available to over 17,000 diverse providers across the state.

Gina D'Angelo showed the group how their feedback and suggestions from the prior meeting had been incorporated into the revised products. For example:

- The cover page had been updated
- The images throughout the documents had been changed
- The content had been simplified and reformatted.



Improvements to the photographs (e.g., more diversity race/ethnicity and gender)



Gina shared that several efforts were underway to collect feedback on the draft documents. This included reviews by CT DPH staff members, outreach to medical providers through Dr. Lynn Sosa's network, individual outreach to specific providers and CT DPH contractors, and suggestions from the ETS Committee.

Gina screen shared documents and asked for comments and observations about some of the initial changes.

- In general, participants felt the materials looked much improved, more inviting, and easier to read.
- Several individuals suggested changing the phrasing of "positive patient outcomes" as it was confusing with HIV+.
- Natalie DuMont suggested a phrase such as "HIV testing is the law in Connecticut and helps with patient outcomes."
- Jen Vargas suggested keeping it even more simple with "HIV testing helps keep Connecticut Healthy."
- Gina and Pedro felt that using language that "Routine HIV testing is now routine" should be used compared to "it is the law" which might evoke a negative response from patients.
 - Some individuals pointed out that that the main audience was providers and providers must



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know the law. Stronger language might be more effective.

- LaRon Nelson stated that the imagery on the cover did not suggest a provider-centric document and suggested placing more emphasis on the providers v. the group of individuals shown in the photo.
 - Several individuals agreed with this observation.
- Jen Vargas stated that the cover does not appear to have an explicit focus or connection to HIV - which might be important for providers with limited time.
- Do not capitalize all the letters in the title. Use upper and lowercase letters so it is easier to read.
- Daniel Davidson stated that the current layout looks very similar to other documents and challenged the group to come up with something more attention getting.
 - Several suggestions were made to adjust or improve the cover:
 - A title of "Routine HIV Testing: A Provider's Guide" with bigger taglines and smaller pictures.
 - A title of "Routine HIV Testing: A Quick Reference Guide for Providers" or "Routine HIV Testing: What Providers Need to Know"
 - Increase the TEST CT! logo.
 - A title of "Eliminate Provider Bias on HIV Testing" to hold providers more accountable.
 - Add the CT DPH logo to give the document additional credibility.
 - Make the provider picture as the featured picture (larger) or the only picture.
- Gina D'Angelo indicated that the CT DPH logo will be added to the document.

The group then reviewed improvements to the Frequently Asked Questions documents. Gina D'Angelo noted improvements such as:

- Answers were worded more simply.
- Information was organized better.
- Titles were clear to help distinguish the purpose of the documents (FAQs that patients may have and FAQs that providers have).

The group made suggestions for improvements:

- Roberta Stewart pointed out the quote and the photo do not relate to each other.
- Add the quote from Danielle Warren Dias about HIV testing and health and change the picture (not a white person).
- Insert a telephone number and fax number for Providers to contact CT DPH. Jen Vargas will share this information.
- Include a link to PrEP navigators and providers.
- Angel suggested clarifying the information to make it clear "How do I report a case to CT DPH" to hold



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providers accountable for their reporting responsibilities.

- Lara Cushman pointed out some grammatical issues such as "PAP" instead of "pap".

The group then previewed the tri-fold brochures. Participants shared comments and suggestions:

- Pedro suggested making the words bigger.
- Danielle suggested adding patient quotes.
- Jen pointed out that some of the phrasing is stigmatizing (e.g., HIV risk). Everyone should be tested!
- Information should be regrouped to "why should everyone be tested?" and "How to stay healthy"
- Reduce the content of HIV testing in Connecticut. Tell them it's the law.
- Roberta suggested adding links for patient resources (e.g., link for testing, PrEP, and other services).
- Angel reminded the group that no QR codes had been included.

Roberta thanked everyone for their suggestions. Gina acknowledged that these suggestions would significantly improve the document and requested that the participants take one more look at the documents. Participants will be sent the documents and asked to send in any additional suggestions.

SYNDEMIC SCREENING

The committee did not discuss the screening instrument and tabled this matter for the August committee meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

No participants introduced new or other business.

NEXT STEPS / MEETING FEEDBACK

- The committee will assemble again in August. In the interim, any updates or requests for information will be shared by email.
- Participants felt the meeting allowed people to see how the materials were coming together and to share suggestions on how to help make the flyers and brochures more accessible to the community.

ADJOURN

Roberta Stewart adjourned the meeting at 1:42 p.m.



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ETS COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

CHPC Members	1/18	2/15	3/15	4/19	5/17	6/21			
Gigi Chaux	x	x			x				
Natalie DuMont	x	x	x	x		x			
Evette Ellis				x		x			
Stephen Feathers			x	x	x	x			
Nilda Fernandez	x								
Dante Gennaro	x								
Blaise Gilchrist	x			x					
Marcelin Joseph	x	x	x		x				
Reggie Knox	x	x	x	x		x			
Norma Little	x								
Roberta Stewart	x	x	x	x	x	x			
Rebecca O'Brien	x	x	x						
Marie Raynor	x	x	x	x					
Angel Ruiz	x		x		x	x			
Mary Tanner	x	x	x	x	x	x			
CHPC Member #	13	8	9	8	6	7			
Public Participants	1/18	2/15	3/15	4/19	5/17	6/21			
Anna Andreozzi					x				
Amy Clark				x		x			
Daniel Davidson	x	x				x			
Maria Diaz				x					
Gina D'Angelo	x	x	x	x	x				
Sam Bowens		x	x	x					
Jean Brown			x	x					
Lara Cushman						x			
Michel Daud		x			x	x			
AC Demidont	x								
Kerry Ellington						x			
Linda Ferraro	x		x	x					
Alex Garbera	x								
Ruth Garcia	x	x	x	x					
Miguel Gonzalez					x	x			
Shavon Gordon	x								
Venesha Heron	x	x	x	x		x			
Anne Hollister					x				
Neena A Jacob	x								
Doug Janssen	x	x		x					
Michael Judd	x	x							
Anne Kohler	x								
Norman Lebron		x							
Maria Lorez	x								
Susan Major			x		x				
Mieykeya McClendon	x								
Krystal Medley						x			
Pedro Mendez	x					x			
Kelley Moore	x	x		x	x				
LaRon Nelson					x	x			
Nathanial Parril	x								
Josh Rozovsky		x							
Filomena Sgambato				x	x	x			
Jenn Vargas	x	x	x		x	x			
Melinda Vazquez-Yopp	x	x				x			
Lisbeth Vasquez	x	x							
Danielle Warren Diaz	x		x		x	x			
Public Participant #	21	14	9	11	11	14			
Total Attendance	34	22	18	19	17	21			

Work Plan Activity and Milestones Over Time	Month 2023											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
General Committee Management												
Approve meeting summary	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		
Updates from partners or collaborators	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		
1. Develop content enhancements for routine HIV testing materials used in the provider tool kit	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Receive update on current tool kit resources	x											
Generate FAQs and response (customer journey map)	x	x										
Identify provider interview list	x											
Conduct interviews with providers and draft scenarios		x	x									
Finalize FAQ and provider scenarios			x									
Share content with CTDPH marketing contractor for packaging				x								
2. Develop "how to" videos to support routine HIV testing and implementation of status neutral model by practitioners	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Develop / confirm list of priority topics / titles	x											
Identify best practices, content, or individuals who can provide subject matter expertise		x										
Discuss core messaging for use in scripts		x	x									
Finalize scripts				x								
Transfer scripts to partner for video production				x	x							
Review videos and provide any feedback for editing					x							
3. Develop brief screening tool that addresses all syndemic areas of focus	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
CTDPH alerts and engages Syndemic Partner Group and coordinates involvement	x											
ETS participants requested to submit "best screening questions" by e-mail		x										
ETS reviews list of best questions and identifies top questions			x									
Develop and review draft screener				x								
Pilot draft screener at up to three CTDPH funded prevention sites					x	x						
Review feedback from pilot process and adjust screener												
Develop recommendations to scale use of screener									x			
4. Develop PrEP-specific content enhancements to provider tool kit to support prevention and status neutral model	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Receive update on current tool kit resources												
Generate FAQs and response												
Identify provider interview list												
Conduct interviews with providers and draft scenarios								x	x			
Finalize FAQ and provider scenarios										x		
Identify priority topics for "how to videos"												
Develop core messaging for use in scripts (includes ETS discussions, interviews with experts)									x	x		
Finalize scripts										x		
Transfer scripts to partner for video production											x	
Share content with CTDPH for inclusion in tool kits												x