



Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium 21 April 2021 Meeting Summary



Please review and send any additions or corrections to CHPC staff on or before 9 May 2021.

Location:	Zoom virtual meeting	
Date:	21 April 2021	Recorders: Michael Nogelo/Dave Bechtel
Start Time:	9:35 a.m.	End Time: 10:26 a.m.
Presiding Chairs:	Nilda Fernandez, Dante Gennaro, Barry Walters	
Attendance:	See end pages for roster of CHPC members and public participants	

MEETING AT A GLANCE

- CHPC Co-Chairs announced that: a) CHPC members voted to approve the March 2021 meeting summary; b) the planned presentation on social determinants of health would be delayed until the May CHPC meeting; c) The CHPC Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC) is looking for new participants to help coordinate statewide HIV Awareness Day Events; and d) MAC is looking to engage more people living with HIV (PLWH) in the CHPC by meeting with HIV support groups.
- Venesha Heron delivered a “knowledge build” segment on the program to provide Connecticut residents access to free in-home HIV test kits.
- Dante Gennaro delivered an update on the work of the CHPC and its committees.
- CHPC committees conducted virtual meetings from 11:00 a.m. to as late as 12:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER and MOMENT OF SILENCE

CHPC Co-Chair Nilda Fernandez called to order the Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC) at 9:35 a.m., offered tips to help create a productive virtual meeting environment, and introduced his fellow CHPC Co-Chairs Barry Walters and Dante Gennaro.

Ms. Fernandez explained that the CHPC is a statewide HIV prevention and care planning body that exists to reduce the rate of new infections and to help those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS connect to services. The CHPC’s vision is to help end the HIV epidemic and connect individuals living with or affected by HIV/AIDS or other diseases such as Hepatitis or Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI).

Ms. Fernandez led participants in a moment of silence to remember those who have been lost to HIV – including CHPC member Ron Lee and former CHPC member Pamela Parks – and to support those who are living with and affected by HIV.

CHPC LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Fernandez reviewed the agenda for the day’s meeting.

Mr. Gennaro announced that:

- The presentation on social determinants of health would be delayed until May due to a scheduling issue for the presenter.
- CHPC members had voted remotely to approve the March 2021 meeting summary.
- The CHPC Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC) is looking to coordinate statewide HIV Awareness Day events and invites new participants who have active roles in planning their own agency's HIV testing and special events. The idea is to unify and share best practices with one another



Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium 21 April 2021 Meeting Summary



and choose four or five specific awareness days that we can celebrate in similar fashion across the state. The next awareness day we hope to plan is National HIV Testing Day on June 27th. Mr. Gennaro said he would love to see a number of agencies collaborate in the making of a successful event, and invited meeting participants and their colleagues who plan (or would like to plan) social events at their agencies to attend the April, May and/or June MAC meetings. Mr. Gennaro encouraged interested participants to contact him, MAC co-chairs Stephen Feathers and Clara O'Quinn, or MAC support lead Michael Nogelo with any questions or comments.

- MAC is also looking to engage more people living with HIV (PLWH). Mr. Gennaro asked meeting participants to let him know about any HIV support groups happening in their towns or agencies via the chat box or by emailing him, the MAC co-chairs, or Michael Nogelo with the name of the group and the contact information for the leader of the group. CHPC and Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH) leaders recognize that not everyone can stop working on Wednesday mornings to participate in CHPC meetings, so it is important to meet clients where they are to ensure their thoughts, feelings, and voices are heard.

Mr. Gennaro reviewed the committee meeting topics for the day.

KNOWLEDGE BUILD: PROMOTING ACCESS WITH IN-HOME HIV TEST KITS

Mr. Gennaro introduced Venesha Heron, a Contract Manager in the HIV Prevention Program at CTDPH for a brief presentation on the program to provide Connecticut residents access to free in-home HIV test kits.

Table 1 shows the results of a poll question of meeting participants prior to the presentation.

Table 1. Check those statements that are true or mostly true.	Number	Percent
I am aware that an HIV home testing option exists	47	100%
I know of someone who has used an HIV home test kit	16	34%
I have some concerns about HIV home test kits – such as confidentiality	6	13%

Ms. Heron explained that CTDPH launched the HIV home testing initiative (#RequestFreeHIVTestCT) around the time that COVID hit. The home test involves a self-administered, oral swab, rapid HIV test that is mailed. It uses the oral fluid from the gumline to detect HIV antibodies. Barriers to testing, especially since COVID and especially for certain populations, include: fear of discrimination, HIV stigma, and lack of willingness to go to get a test or talk to a counselor. The at-home HIV test is an option for people not wanting to go to a clinic in person. Home tests of all kinds have become popular because they are convenient and private. Some clinics have limited in-person testing due to COVID, so home testing was expanded. The terms “self-test” and “at-home test kit” are used interchangeably. Seventeen Connecticut agencies are participating in the HIV home testing initiative. The test is free and can be done at the person’s convenience.

Ms. Heron explained that in-home counseling is an important part of any testing process. CTDPH encourages this for people who are tested at home, as it helps to ease anxiety. Many agencies are doing telemedicine now, so they can offer support in this way. It is important to have support for people who have reactive tests. Ms. Heron shared testimonials from community members about the need for, and convenience of, at-home testing. CTDPH has a directory of participating agencies. Since the program started a year ago, through April 13, the program has distributed 828 self-tests, and has not received any positive results. Most requests come from the five cities with the highest incidence rates (New Haven, Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport, and Danbury). Almost 3 in 4 requests come from males, and just under one-third from non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic white, and Hispanic residents. Ms. Heron showed data on the testing histories and reported risk



Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium 21 April 2021 Meeting Summary



behaviors of those requesting tests. Tests are mailed with an HIV prevention pamphlet. Ms. Heron showed the group a messaging campaign image and encouraged agencies to use the campaign images.

Mr. Gennaro said Taylor Edelmann reported that someone taking an at-home test through Apex Community Care soon after receiving a COVID vaccine shot had a false positive. Ms. Heron said she would reach out to Andrew Thomas about this and would share answers. Mr. Edelmann said the individual was spreading negative information in the community about the test, so Apex would like information to be able to combat the information being spread. Ms. Heron encouraged agencies to bring issues to her attention.

CHPC PRESENTATION: CHPC UPDATE

Mr. Gennaro introduced himself and gave an overview of the CHPC committees.

- The Getting to Zero (G2Z) Committee is dedicated to implementing the recommendations that came from the GTZ CT Initiative. G2Z is led by co-chairs Brian Datcher and Barry Walters, and CTDPH liaison Gina D'Angelo. G2Z hosted a Routine HIV Testing panel discussion with four represented sites; identified a short list of follow-up steps that might lead to stronger support for Routine HIV Testing legislation and expansion of best practices; and will host four stakeholders at its April 21 meeting to discuss sexual health education and STI prevention.
- The Data and Assessment Committee (DAC) Needs Assessment Projects (NAP) Team reviews and compiles data to implement planning work. The NAP Team is led by co-chair Laura Aponte and CTDPH liaison Venesha Heron. The NAP Team debriefed the first pilot NAP HIV workforce training on Boundaries, Ethics and Self-Care, facilitated by Melanie Alvarez of ACT, on March 16th; planned for upcoming trainings on topics such as mental health/substance misuse disorders, confidentiality, and trauma-informed care; is currently working on identifying instructors for upcoming trainings on topics such as motivational interviewing; and will promote a Men of Color conference.
- The DAC Quality and Performance Measures (QPM) Team works in conjunction with the NAP Team to review and compile data to implement planning work. The QPM Team is led by co-chair Peta-Gaye Nembhard and CTDPH liaison Sue Major. The QPM Team reviewed Partner Services data and discussed potential indicators to track for the comprehensive plan; learned about Connecticut Children's Medical Center/UConn Health plans to pilot-test a 12-question version of the HIV Stigma Scale; and is planning a Quality Webinar to address PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) strategies, engaging consumers during COVID, and more.
- The Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC) focuses on communications and membership and recently joined forces with Positive Prevention CT (PPCT). MAC is led by co-chairs Clara O'Quinn and Stephen Feathers and CTDPH lead Dante Gennaro. MAC has been discussing possible changes to the CHPC member mentoring program; reviewing member attendance; reviewing communications strategies via the CHPC website; and supporting a new PPCT messaging campaign, in addition to the community engagement and statewide event planning mentioned earlier.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Walters invited CHPC members and public participants to introduce any other business in the chat.

- Mr. Edelmann announced that Apex Community Care will run a Hep C testing event for Hepatitis Testing Day planned for May 19th from 12 - 3 pm at Coe Park in Torrington.



Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium

21 April 2021 Meeting Summary



- Luis Magana reported that ViiV is coming up with new HIV meds that would inject once a month in a clinical setting as opposed to daily pills.
- Tom Butcher announced that the Part A program received a funding cut of \$144,373 for FY 2021. They pressed hard for carryover funding for the “In It to End It” campaign and the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) finally granted carryover funding.
- Angelique Croasdale-Mills asked if people from other Parts have unspent funds and if they have requested carry forward. Hartford Part A had unspent funds and was granted a carry forward. This funding will help minimize service cuts due to other funding cuts. Mr. Gennaro suggested the HIV Funders Group meeting on April 28 would be a good opportunity to discuss that topic.

Mr. Walters invited participants to forward other important information to CHPC leaders or staff to be shared with the CHPC distribution list.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Walters encouraged all participants to complete a 1-minute survey to share any feedback on how to improve virtual CHPC meetings. The survey can be accessed by scanning a QR code on the slide or by clicking a link in an email sent to all participants after the meeting. Mr. Walters thanked everyone for a productive meeting, and adjourned the meeting at 10:26 a.m.



Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium
21 April 2021 Meeting Summary



CHPC ATTENDANCE RECORDS (1 = present; 0 = absent; arriving late is counted as an absence for official records)

First Name	Last Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Victor	Acevedo	1	1	1	1						
Melanie	Alvarez	1	1	1	1						
Laura	Aponte	1	0	1	1						
Erma	Benedetto	1	1	1	0						
Thomas	Butcher	1	1	0	1						
Gigi	Chaux	1	1	1	1						
Brian	Datcher	1	1	1	1						
Xavier	Day	1	1	1	1						
Martina	De La Cruz	1	1	1	1						
Natalie	DuMont	1	1	1	1						
Taylor	Edelmann	0	1	1	1						
Stephen	Feathers	1	1	1	1						
Nilda	Fernandez	1	1	1	1						
Carl	Ferris	1	1	1	1						
Jose	Figueroa*	0	0	0	-						
Dante	Gennaro	1	1	1	1						
Tawana	Guadarrama	1	1	1	1						
Cynthia	Hall	0	1	1	1						
Marcelin	Joseph	1	1	1	1						
Reggie	Knox	1	1	1	1						
Ronald	Lee**	1	1	1	-						
Debra	Lombardo	1	1	1	0						
Luis	Martinez*	0	0	0	-						
Waleska	Mercado***	-	-	-	-						
Mitchell	Namias	1	1	1	1						
Peta-Gaye	Nembhard	1	1	1	1						
Clara	O'Quinn	0	1	0	1						
Bob	Sideleau	1	1	1	0						
Jeffrey	Snell****	0	1	0	-						
Roberta	Stewart	1	1	1	1						
Barry	Walters	1	1	1	1						
TOTAL		24	27	25	23						
PERCENTAGE		80%	90%	83%	85%						

*Discharged after missing third meeting of 2021

**Deceased

***On leave while CHPC meetings are virtual

****Resigned



Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium
21 April 2021 Meeting Summary



PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS (1 = present)

Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Alford, Claudia	1									
Allen, Whitney			1	1						
Amadour Bueno, Fabio			1	1						
Birth, Sheila			1							
Bonelli, John			1							
Boone, Joyce			1							
Brown, Jean		1	1	1						
Buchelli, Marianne	1	1	1	1						
Cifuentes, Alberto			1							
Cisneros, Max			1							
Cole, Christopher	1									
Croasdale-Mills, Angelique	1	1	1	1						
Cruz, Ginger	1									
D'Angelo, Gina	1	1	1	1						
Danvers, Karina		1								
Davidson, Daniel	1		1							
Del Vecchio, Christina	1	1	1	1						
Demidont, A.C.	1	1								
Diaz, Luis	1	1	1	1						
Diaz-Olivares, Yanira			1							
Dones-Mendez, Dulce	1	1	1							
Ferraro, Linda				1						
Figueroa, Jessica			1							
Floyd, Letrell	1									
Francis, Shannon			1							
Gaines, Tia				1						
Gowell, James	1									
Henriquez, Wanda	1									
Heron, Venesha	1	1	1	1						
Hong, Grace	1	1								
Hulton, Daniel	1	1	1	1						
Irizarry, Luis			1	1						
Janssen, Doug		1								
Jean-Baptiste, Clunie	1	1	1	1						
Jones, Coley	1	1	1	1						
Kelly, Pat		1								
Kenny, Will	1									
Kominske, Angela	1									
Kotey, Dionne	1	1	1	1						
Lane, Stuart			1							
Linardos, Heather	1		1	1						
Lopez, Aurelio				1						
Lorenzo, Maria		1		1						
Magaña, Luis	1	1	1	1						
Mairena, Oscar		1	1							
Major, Susan	1	1	1	1						
McDavid, Kiana	1	1		1						
McMullen, Fran	1									
McNair, LaTonya			1							
McNulty, Caitlyn				1						
McPherson, Loretta			1	1						
Mierzwa, Sharon			1							
Mitchell, Gabrielle	1			1						



Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium
21 April 2021 Meeting Summary



Name	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Moore, Kelly		1	1	1						
Moranino, Marlene	1	1								
Mott, Erika		1	1	1						
Muñoz, Consuelo	1	1	1							
N, Joe	1									
Novis, Steve	1		1	1						
Ostapoff, Michael	1	1								
Pawlow, Dustin	1	1								
Pierre-Louis, Luje	1	1	1	1						
Pollard, LaJeune			1							
Quettant, Francesca	1									
R, Rich	1									
Ramos, Alyssa	1									
Rodriguez, Joselyn				1						
Rodriguez-Santana, Ramón	1	1	1	1						
Romanik, Christine	1	1	1							
Ruiz, Angel	1	1	1	1						
Salazar, Juan	1									
Scott, Aaron				1						
Sergeon, Tajae			1	1						
Smith, Khelsey	1	1	1	1						
Speers, Sue	1	1	1	1						
Tengatenga, Cecil		1								
Thuillier, Antoinette	1									
Vargas, Jennifer	1	1	1	1						
Vazquez-Yopp, Melinda	1	1	1							
Velez, Idiana	1	1								
Virgen, Roman				1						
Warren-Dias, Danielle	1	1		1						
Wimbish, Roselyn	1	1								
Unidentified participants	8	4	2	1						
TOTAL COUNT	58	44	48	40						