**Location:** Chrysalis Center - Hartford, CT

**Date:** July 17, 2019 **Recorder:** Michael Nogelo

**Start Time:** 9:40a.m. **End Time:** 1:50 p.m.

**Presiding Chairs:** Gina D’Angelo, Blaise Gilchrist, Barry Walters

**Attendance:** See last page for roster of CHPC members and public participants

**MEETING AT A GLANCE**

* CHPC members voted to approve the June 2019 meeting summary without changes.
* Standing CHPC committees and the ad hoc Prevention Committee conducted meetings.
* The CHPC conducted a panel discussion: “Voices of the People – Perspectives about HIV.”

**CALL TO ORDER, MOMENT OF SILENCE, AND INTRODUCTIONS**

CHPC co-chair Blaise Gilchrist called to order the Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC) at 9:40 a.m. The CHPC is a statewide HIV prevention and care planning body that exists to reduce the rate of new infections and to help those who are living and affected by HIV/AIDS connect to services. CHPC statewide goals line up with National HIV/AIDS Strategy goals. Connecticut is on a mission of Getting to Zero (G2Z); this includes addressing health disparities and inequities. Mr. Gilchrist shared information about how the CHPC meetings work using a consensus model for decision-making in committees, and how the CHPC participants create an environment for inclusion and participation from all participants.

Mr. Gilchrist asked meeting participants to hold a moment of silence to honor all of those individuals infected, affected, or who have lost their lives as a result of HIV/AIDS.

Introductions were conducted by way of meeting participants sharing their names and the town in which they live or an organizational affiliation. Mr. Tom Butcher stated his preference for using names and towns of residence during introductions. Ms. Andrea Lombard shared her perspective that she felt stigmatized sharing an organizational affiliation (when it may help meeting participants to connect to important resources).

**CO-CHAIR UPDATE**

CHPC co-chair Ms. Gina D’Angelo explained that the co-chairs use a segment of the meeting to share or to review any headline news.

Attendance, Satisfaction, and Feedback. Ms. D’Angelo: a) showed information about the CHPC monthly total meeting attendance for CHPC members and public participants, and noted that CHPC meetings are averaging nearly 75 participants per meeting; and b) reviewed information on overall meeting experience and satisfaction and reported that satisfaction remains exceptional at 98%. Ms. D’Angelo stated that the feedback forms for June included a question about suggestions to change the 2020 CHPC meeting schedule or location. The Executive Committee reviewed the small number of suggestions and determined that the 2020 meeting schedule for CHPC will be the same as 2019 with eight (8) monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month from January through August. All of the meetings will be held in Hartford at the Chrysalis Center. Ms. D’Angelo stated that the featured question of the month on the July feedback form focused on assessing interest in networking opportunities at the CHPC meetings. Committee Updates. Ms. D’Angelo shared information for each committee on the work they accomplished in June and the focus of the work for the July meeting. The CHPC Co-Chairs believed that sharing information in this format can create a better understanding of and appreciation for the committee work as well as allow public participants to identify areas of interest.

| **Committee** | **Focus of the Committee Work**  |
| --- | --- |
| **June**  | **July**  |
| **Ad Hoc Prevention** | * Review G2Z implementation progress updates
 | * Develop recommendation for Prevention Committee – including priority work areas
 |
| **Membership & Awareness** | * Review June newsletter
* CHPC member recruitment for 2020
 | * Review August newsletter
* CHPC member recruitment & selection for 2020
 |
| **Needs Assessment Projects** | * Streamline workforce survey instrument
 | * Workforce survey instrument update
* Review stigma data from survey of people living with HIV (PLWH)
 |
| **Quality & Performance Measures**  | * PrEP-to-need ratio indicator
* Quality Management (QM) Summit (Sep 2019)
 | * CHPC indicator review
* QM Summit (Sep 2019)
 |
| **Executive** | * CHPC process improvement
* 2020 meeting schedule
* Focus group logistics
 | * CHPC process improvement
* End-of-year planning (August)
* Focus group logistics
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Ms. D’Angelo shared additional information from the ad hoc Prevention Committee. Specifically, the ad hoc Prevention Committee gathered information from liaisons in G2Z communities. The information focused on describing progress on the first five months of G2Z implementation (January 1, 2019 to May 31, 2019). Ms. D’Angelo shared high-level themes: a) All respondents remain in the early stages of implementation; b) Communities are building upon their current (care) relationships with the intention to expand the partnership; c) Primary areas of focus include mobilizing partners and pre-exposure prophyaxis (PrEP) education and implementation; and d) Implementation challenges include resources (funding, staff) and engagement – priority populations and partners. Ms. D’Angelo noted that the City of New Haven Ryan White Part A recently received a two-year grant award to support the coordination of G2Z efforts.

Ms. D’Angelo shared information about the Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) campaign. Connecticut recently signed on as the 13th state in the nation to use U=U campaign resources to promote the message that science says people with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV sexually. CHPC co-chair Mr. Barry Walters shared social media information about the A Place to Nourish your Health (APNH) as a follow-up to a request from a prior meeting to show social media resources in an effort to increase collaboration and use of social media within and across communities. Mr. Walters stated that providing real-time information has become increasingly important to gain and keep trust and relevancy. Ms. Roberta Stewart asked Mr. Walters to provide more explanation about subscribing to content feeds. Ms. Walters described subscriptions to media feeds that provide content – text and videos, such as the Gay Men’s Sexual Health Alliance as well as the advantages of platforms like Twitter and Instagram where one post can be shared across multiple platforms. Mr. Walters stated that often content subscriptions do not cost anything. However, the content may be branded by an organization. This branding does not diminish the value or usefulness of the information. Ms. D’Angelo added that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other organizations create and share content and encourage its dissemination. Mr. Samuel Bowens shared the process for using the Waterbury Health Department website and social media platforms. Ms. Angelique Croasdale-Mills suggested that the CHPC consider offering as a presentation a social media 101 workshop. Mr. Mark Nickel stated that the ad hoc Prevention Committee work can help find ways to improve the awareness and use of existing resources – including connections between the social media subject matter experts in each of these communities.

**APPROVAL OF JUNE MEETING SUMMARY**

Mr. Gilchrist explained that the CHPC operates as a public planning group and therefore records a meeting summary. The CHPC members review the notes and take a formal vote to approve the meeting summary. Ms. Carmen Cruz made a motion to approve the June meeting summary with Ms. Clara Langley O’Quinn seconding the motion. Mr. Gilchrist opened the floor for discussion and asked CHPC members to identify any additions or corrections. After receiving no additions or corrections, Mr. Gilchrist closed the floor for discussion and called a vote by raise of hands. The motion carried with **15** CHPC members voting yes, **0** CHPC members voting no, and **5** CHPC members abstaining. One CHPC member stepped out of the room prior to the vote.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Ms. D’Angelo invited CHPC members and public participants to share announcements, success stories, or any emerging issues in their communities.

* Mr. Dante Gennaro encouraged interested individuals to attend Positive Prevention Connecticut meetings on the 2nd Monday of every month from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Meriden Health Department. The group will develop a campaign for the priority population of African-American males with a release date scheduled for December 1 (World AIDS Day). The group will conduct focus groups with the transgender and African-American communities and would benefit from any assistance.
* Ms. Lombard shared the accomplishments of the efforts to conduct outreach in priority areas such as Norwalk. Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) link back to care PLWH and people with Hepatitis C (Hep C), and facilitate connections to other resources such as insurance. Ms. Lombard stated the importance of connecting G2Z efforts with similar efforts to reduce Hep C.
* Mr. Walters shared information about upcoming Aging Positively conversations coordinated by APNH on July 25 in New Haven.
* Mr. Walters encouraged all meeting participants to check in with their family, friends, and neighbors during the extreme heat and humidity.
* Ms. Kat Auguste shared information about: a) an upcoming presentation at a senior housing complex in Bridgeport on the topic of Hep C and Baby Boomers, and b) a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) pride event on July 18 in Bridgeport.
* Mr. Carl Ferris shared that Lisa Lisa will play on July 20 on the New Haven Green and the Wailers will play in Hamden on July 19.
* Mr. Bowens shared additional information about the Waterbury Health Department Facebook page, and encouraged participants to go online to Waterbury Health Department and search HIV to gain access to a weekly message about the location of stops for the mobile health van and information about other efforts and resources.
* Ms. Danielle Warren-Dias reported back on her fundraising motorcycle ride to the West Coast. Donors contributed approximately $3,500 (with donations still being accepted). The funds will be used to re-convene the Phenomenal Woman intervention program.
* Ms. Peta-Gaye Nembhard shared information about a recent presentation given by her and Ms. Melanie Alvarez on Connecticut’s Data Integration Grant (DIG). The audience included members from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as well as Human Resources Services Administration (HRSA). The presentation included best practices and peer-led models. Ms. Nembhard stated that Connecticut’s DIG project was very ambitious because it attempted to implement a bi-directional data system. The U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) continues to encourage data integration. Ms. Nembhard stared that Mr. Harold Phillips continues to pay attention to Connecticut for its innovation and great work.
* Ms. Nembhard reminded everyone of the Quality Management summit on September 18, 2019, and invited interested organizations to share their lessons learned. Even projects that do not work out as intended generate valuable lessons learned. Also, any projects that involve the use of social media would represent a great addition.
* Mr. Bowens announced that the Waterbury Health Department now offers free home HIV test kits. More information is available on the web site.
* Mr. Daniel Davidson stated that APNH in collaboration with the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS (CIRA) recently secured a grant award to develop a new intervention with social media outreach for PrEP. The project will get underway in the upcoming months. Please contact Mr. Walters for more information.

**PANEL DISCUSISION – VOICE OF THE PEOPLE**

Mr. Walters explained that the CHPC commits to creating opportunities to get input from all perspectives of the community, and uses many different methods such as: public CHPC meetings, CHPC feedback forms, the PLWH needs assessment survey, the PLWH focus groups, and monthly presentations. This month, the CHPC organized a “voice of the people” panel discussion to hear personal perspectives about HIV prevention and care. Mr. Walters moderated a discussion with four panelists. The paragraphs below contain highlights from each discussion.

Mr. Jeffrey Snell. Mr. Snell explained that he had recently moved from Atlanta to Northwest Connecticut and has been living with HIV for 33 years. He is committed to helping the HIV infected and affected communities. Mr. Snell described his perspective on the extent to which more stigma appears to exist in Connecticut. Mr. Snell descried the “one-stop shopping” approach for all relevant services – including dental – that was available in Atlanta. Mr. Snell noted that in Northwest Connecticut, the services are not organized in this manner and are often difficult to access, and he was not aware of a one-stop approach in any Connecticut community. Mr. Snell spoke about the loving and accepting environment available in Atlanta and observed the differences in the South with laws about disclosure. It often feels that Connecticut residents prefer to use a “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach. It is important to share this information with health providers, sexual partners, and other members of your support network.

Ms. Carmen Cruz. Ms. Cruz was celebrating her birthday and has been living with HIV for more than 30 years. Ms. Cruz participates in community work in Waterbury where many individuals in her support group refer to her as the group “mother.” Ms. Cruz provides translation assistance for many people and advocates for individuals to have their basic needs met. Ms. Cruz shared reflections about changes over the decades including progress in access to services and medication. Ms. Cruz observed that fewer people seem to get involved at rallies. Ms. Cruz felt it was important for people to hear that PLWH can live long, healthy lives. Living with HIV (as well as other health conditions including cancer) requires a support system and a balance in life. For example, Ms. Cruz stepped away from her job as a social worker for the Department of Children and Families and found her balance – including goals to earn a doctorate. Ms. Cruz encourages everyone to play a part in reducing stigma by getting involved in community events and conducting community outreach to share their stories and make personal connections. It is this authenticity and honesty that creates fear and results in courage and beautiful outcomes such as her 10-year marriage where disclosing her HIV status resulted in a stronger relationship (and not her partner choosing to leave).

Mr. Carl Ferris described his history growing up in Antigua and the circumstances such as family dynamics in response to his sexual preferences that led to his move to the United States at age 21. Mr. Ferris has been living with HIV for 20 years. Mr. Ferris observed that friends of his who live in the southern part of the U.S. do not experience the same level of care and support as described by Mr. Snell. The goal is for all members of the community to feel supported, accepted, and loved – by members of our families, by our friends, and in our communities. Mr. Ferris described his journey and discussed the impact of housing – staying with a friend, staying in a homeless shelter, living in housing funded by the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program, and eventually moving into stable housing. Mr. Ferris observed the points of the journey at which he engaged at a different level such as cooking at a homeless shelter or advocating for himself by reaching out to housing resources in the community. Mr. Ferris discussed the challenges of not feeling supported or feeling stigmatized and how this creates vulnerability for individuals to use or abuse drugs. Mr. Ferris recognized that a strength of his relates to his social skills, and he first needed to accept and love himself before those social skills would flourish. Mr. Ferris said that he remains committed to helping other people help themselves and to sharing information about housing resources to the best of his ability. Mr. Ferris shared his gratitude for all of those who have helped in during his journey and looks forward to working with groups such as Aging Positively at APNH in New Haven.

Mr. Dante Gennaro described that he was born in Middletown, grew up in Norwich, and was diagnosed with HIV in 2012. Mr. Gennaro’s personal journey resulted in his interest in and commitment to working in the HIV prevention field and becoming part of the solution. This started with volunteering to provide no-cost licensed massage therapist services to patients at APNH. Mr. Gennaro reflected on the impact of stigma on his personal journey, and the extent to which a lack of education and sensitivity results in extremely stressful situations, including circumstances that may lead individuals to contemplate suicide. Mr. Gennaro shared experiences in which he felt providers stigmatized him or simply made assumptions without holding a conversation. For example, a medical provider indicated that Mr. Gennaro did not need the latest HIV medication because he was “young” and had a “strong” immune system. On another occasion, Mr. Gennaro shared with a provider that he was experiencing side effects from a medication. The provider quickly dismissed his perspective and suggested that Mr. Gennaro most likely contracted the condition from the same person who transmitted HIV to him. Mr. Gennaro transformed these experiences into a passion to help educate people – including adolescents and providers – with a goal of eliminating stigma. Mr. Gennaro observed that people do not “come out” one time. Every day involves interactions that may involve disclosing HIV status, sexual identity, or gender identity. These discussions require courage, calmness, love, and support. These discussions involve getting information and messages out to a wide variety of audiences.

Other important themes emerging from the insights of the panelists included:

* Knowledge is power. Educate yourself. Stay current with new initiatives and terms such as U=U and G2Z. No reason exists for anyone to be afraid of PLWH.
* Love and accept yourself. This is an important part of the journey that must occur. Pretending to be someone you are not will take its toll in many ways – including self-harm or even addiction.
* Focus on the present and the future. Do not worry about how, when, or where you got infected. Ms. Cruz shared her goal of getting a doctorate. Mr. Snell stated, “Every day is a brand-new day, and I will be the best that I can be.”
* Appreciate and do not judge. Create environments that allow PLWH not to hesitate to share information and also not to think about their HIV status unless they are taking a medication or at a medical visit.
* Keep the HIV workforce current with knowledge about important resources such as HOPWA.
* Meet your clients where they are at and help them move forward instead of meeting your clients where they are at and leaving them in that same place. Use understandable language. Hold a conversation. Be authentic and empathetic.
* Advocate for yourself. Educate yourself. Love yourself.

Hopes and Dreams. Looking ahead, Mr. Snell looks forward to helping Connecticut Get to Zero and making an impact on programs in the Torrington area. Ms. Cruz wants to see G2Z occur in her lifetime, and looks forward to starting a doctoral program. Mr. Ferris feels good about himself, may go back to school to get a bachelor’s degree, and envisions returning to Antigua to start a homeless shelter and address drug addiction and HIV education. Mr. Gennaro aspires to be the “gay white Oprah” and is currently working on a book series with the first book published. The first book, titled, “The Hazard Gene” tells the story of five families with special powers. These families all fight to be the most dominant family with lessons and challenges including sexual and gender identity infused into the storylines.

* Ms. D’Angelo commended Mr. Snell for his passion in the context of moving into a challenging, more rural part of Connecticut that was very different from Atlanta. Ms. D’Angelo stated that Mr. Snell’s perspective and insight brings great value to the CHPC.
* A public participant reflected upon her experience of moving to Connecticut from New York City and entering a service environment that feels much more fragmented and frustrating – even to find access to a good doctor, easy transportation to the food store, or access to affordable housing. The amount of stigma feels strong to the point of others showing discomfort talking about her HIV status. It is challenging to live in an environment where strong stigma exists. You get caught between wanting to protect yourself and not share your status or getting tagged as a PLWH. The panelists acknowledged these challenges are real and difficult. Mr. Ferris offered a hug, and all panelists shared their confidence and encouragement to take care of herself, love herself, and keep her process moving forward.
* Ms. Warren-Dias shared a story in which a patient with a similar cultural heritage as Mr. Ferris felt ostracized from his mother, who would not hug him after finding out his status. Ms. Warren-Dias described the process of working through these issues and family dynamics, and encouraged the providers, especially those who are seeing a spike in young, newly-diagnosed patients, to incorporate cultural competency and sensitivity into all aspects of outreach and engagement. Mr. Ferris commented that family dynamics tend to be complicated, and individuals need to find and build a support network that will work for them and allow them to focus on self-love. As an example, Mr. Ferris stated that he enjoys a great rapport with his doctors and pharmacists, and he views HIV as part of the process that allowed him to love himself and become the person he is today.

**LUNCH**

Ms. D’Angelo reminded individuals of committee meeting room assignments for meetings that would start immediately after lunch. Ms. D’Angelo asked anyone leaving early to complete and return their meeting feedback form. Participants enjoyed a lunch break that started at 11:50 a.m.

**OTHER BUSINESS, FEEDBACK, AND ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Walters reminded the meeting participants that the summary of committee work was reviewed in the morning during the CHPC co-chair update, and asked CHPC committee chairs to share only information that may be different from the morning update.

* Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC) co-chair Mr. Stephen Feathers stated that the MAC is in the process of recruiting new members. Priority recruits include young people, males, men who have sex with men (MSMs), PLWH, Fairfield County residents, and individuals who are African-American or Latinx.

Mr. Walters inquired about any new business. No one introduced new business.

Mr. Walters reminded all meeting participants to complete and return their meeting feedback forms. Mr. Walters adjourned the meeting at 1:50 p.m.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Member Attendance\*** | **1/16** | **2/20** | **3/20** | **4/17** | **5/15** | **6/19** | **7/17** | **8/21** |
| 1. Laura Aponte
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Kat Auguste
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Clifford Batson
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Susan Bouffard
 | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** |  |
| 1. Thomas Butcher
 | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** |  |
| 1. Angelique Croasdale-Mills
 | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** |  |
| 1. Carmen Cruz
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Gina D’Angelo
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Stephen Feathers
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Nilda Fernandez
 | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** |  |
| 1. Carl Ferris
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Jose Figueroa
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Ann Galloway Johnson
 | **A** | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** |  |
| 1. Lauren Gau
 | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Dante Gennaro
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Blaise Gilchrist
 | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Clara Langley O’Quinn
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Ron Lee
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** |  |
| 1. Andrea Lombard
 | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** |  |
| 1. Luis Magana
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** |  |
| 1. Angel Medina
 | **A** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Waleska Mercado
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Glenn Scott
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** |  |
| 1. Jeffrey Snell
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **A** | **P** | **A** | **P** |  |
| 1. Roberta Stewart
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| 1. Barry Walters
 | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** | **P** |  |
| Total Present | **26** | **29** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **21** | **21** |  |
| \*Members who arrive after the first vote or leave before the end of the meeting are listed as absent. |

**Public participants (54)**

Melanie Alvarez; Cinqué Barlow; Beasha Bartlette; Samuel Bowens; Erick Carrión; Jim Cataquet; Allison Champlin; Lauren Ciborowski; Belinda Clark; David Colbert; Reina Cordero; Milton Cortez; Daniel Davidson; Martina De La Cruz; Christina Del Vecchio; Mildred Diaz; Wanda Dunbar; Taylor Edelmann; Alsamendi Fleurival; Brittany Gardner; Deborah Gosselin; Venesha Heron; Coley Jones; Marcelin Joseph; Gabio Justin; Dionne Kotey; Clunie Leon-Baptiste; Aureilio Lopez, Jr.; Maria Lorenzo; Sarah Macone; Teresa Madera; Erin Malgioglio; Sue Major; Zenovia Melendez; Tara Millrod; Kelly Moore; Erika Mott; Consuelo Munóz; Mitchell Namias; Peta-Gaye Nembhard; Maribel Nievis; Shaquille Piagatt; Joselyn Rodriguez; Rosie Rodriguez; William Rosa; DeLita Rose-Daniels; Angel Ruiz; Donna Sciacca; Emily Semmelrock; Sue Speer; Leigh Stepanian; Abigail Torres; Idiana Velez; Danielle Warran-Dias