



CONNECTICUT HIV
PLANNING CONSORTIUM

JUNE 2021

The CHPC is an integrated, statewide prevention and care planning group comprised of diverse partners—including persons living with HIV.



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MISSION STATEMENT:

To create a coordinated statewide prevention and care system in which the rate of new HIV infections is reduced, and those who are living with and affected by HIV/AIDS are connected to appropriate care and support services.

HIV/AIDS Planning News & Notes

VACCINES & PHARMACEUTICALS IMPACT THE END OF THE HIV EPIDEMIC

By Seja Jackson, PhD, APRN-BC, AAHIVS and Andrea Winston, PharmD, BCACP
Trinity Health of New England, Burgdorf Health Center



Seja Jackson, PhD, APRN-BC, AAHIVS Andrea Winston, PharmD, BCACP

Since the 1980's, HIV has had a major impact on global health, with over 38 million people living with HIV in 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020). Despite over 30 years of research, there is still no vaccine to prevent HIV transmission. With at least 15 ongoing trials using a wide range of new methodologies, however, scientists continue to investigate the challenge of creating a safe and effective vaccine.

A few decades ago, using condoms was the only HIV prevention method, but we have seen tremendous innovation and success in the development of **new HIV prevention medications and delivery methods** in recent years. There have been particularly exciting developments in HIV prevention with pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Two currently-available PrEP medications involve a daily pill: Truvada (and a generic version) for all people and Descovy for those assigned male at birth. Data from the U.S. National HIV Surveillance System from 2012-2016 demonstrated that the use of PrEP increased from 8,768 people in 2012 to 77,120 people in 2016, contributing to a decrease in the rate of new HIV diagnoses from 13.1 to 11.8 per 100,000 people (Smith, Sullivan, Caldwell, et al., 2020). Taking PrEP may soon become even easier, as an injectable PrEP medication lasting two months, and possibly longer, is under investigation, and a PrEP vaginal ring for those assigned female at birth is also in development (Buhl, 2021).

New, 21st century HIV treatments are easy to take, have minimal side effects, and are effective in controlling the HIV virus to undetectable levels, leading to the Undetectable Equals Untransmissible (U=U) method of treatment as prevention (TasP). The most thrilling aspect is the potential for innovative and high-tech delivery methods such as injectables and implants that work for 4-6 months before replacement, long-acting oral tablets that last a week or more, microneedle patches, nanoparticle-based therapies, cell and gene therapies, and more. Most recently, a once-monthly injectable medication, Cabenuva, became available for use (Buhl, 2021). These medications not only treat HIV and prevent the transmission of the virus, but also decrease the stigma and anxiety of taking oral HIV medications daily.

Accurate information can be found online at TheBodyPro.com, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC.gov), the International AIDS Society (IAS), and the American Academy of HIV Medicine websites. POZ, Positively Aware, and Plus magazines provide online and written resources for the general public.

References

- Buhl, L. (2021, March 22). Long-acting HIV treatment and PrEP pipeline update: so many formulations! HIV treatment strategies, <https://www.thebodypro.com/article/croi-2021-long-acting-hiv-treatment-prep-pipeline>
- Smith, D. K., Sullivan, P. S., Cadwell, B., et al. (2020). Evidence of an association of increases in pre-exposure prophylaxis coverage with decreases in Human Immunodeficiency Virus diagnosis rates in the United States, 2012-20167. *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, 71(12), 15 December 2020. 3144-3151. <http://www.doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciz1229>
- World Health Organization (WHO); Global HIV Programme. (2021). <https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/fact-sheet>

CONNECTICUT HIV PLANNING CONSORTIUM UPDATE

The time is now.

Ending
the
HIV
Epidemic

After gearing up to develop Connecticut's new **5-year plan to end the syndemics in 2021**, the CHPC adjusted its timeline when the CHPC's federal funders recently announced that the planning guidance for the next 5-year plan will not be released until summer 2021. The new plan is due in December 2022 rather than December 2021, giving the CHPC community more opportunities to engage community members, service providers, and other stakeholders in learning and discussion related to the five pillars that will hold up Connecticut's plan:

- **DIAGNOSE**
- **TREAT**
- **PREVENT**
- **RESPOND**
- **DEVELOP WORKFORCE**



Deidre McDaniel
MSW, LCSW

The featured presentation at the May CHPC meeting offered a prime opportunity for individual and collective learning. Deidre McDaniel, MSW, LCSW and President and Founder of Health Equity Resources and Strategies (H.E.R.S.) delivered a presentation titled **"Moving from Intent to Impact: Strategies for Addressing Health Inequities"** to 75

CHPC members and public participants. Ms. McDaniel described how reporting of disparate rates in health among marginalized communities have become normalized and accusatory due to an emphasis on the "risky behaviors" of a

population, versus the development of strategies to address the structural and social determinants that contribute to poor health outcomes. Participants learned to identify and discuss the root causes of health inequities, and to apply strategies for addressing health inequities at the individual and organizational level.

The CHPC Getting to Zero (G2Z) Committee has begun to develop a **Routine HIV Testing Tool Kit** to support the expansion of routine HIV testing in Connecticut. The tool kit will leverage existing routine HIV testing protocols, a recently-convened Routine HIV Testing stakeholder engagement group, planning and capacity-building activities underway through a City of New Haven G2Z grant project, and information available from national conferences and technical assistance resources.

UPCOMING VIRTUAL CHPC Meetings

June 16th | July 21st | August 18th | 9:15 am

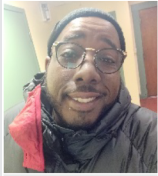
[Click here for the Meeting Link](#)

Visit the CHPC website at
www.cthivplanning.org

The website has information about upcoming CHPC meetings, news and events, meeting documents, resources and partners, and membership applications.



COMMITTEES



CREATIVE CHAIR

Christian Brooks
Advancing CT Together (ACT)
Creates the content that goes into PPCT materials and campaigns



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT CHAIR

Alixe Dittmore
Greater Hartford Harm Reduction Coalition (GHHRC)
Examines effective HIV Prevention messaging from around the globe & decides what campaign ideas & promotional materials PPCT produces



COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Taylor Edelmann
Apex Community Care
Disseminates PPCT materials & campaigns via social media

FEATURED CAMPAIGN

PPCT's brand new Superhero Campaign is up, up & away! This original series will feature the Prevention Pack, a cast of superheroes who make it their mission to take on Dr. Stigma and his henchmen, like Mizz Information! Expect lift off in the next couple months!



BEST PRACTICES

EVENTS: *The Show Must Go On!*

Now that we've been cooped up for over a year and restrictions are being lifted, many agencies and organizations are left with the task of resuming in-person events without much guidance. Here are some tips to help you put on events with ease and success!

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Ensure that there is appropriate signage to create a flow of traffic throughout the event so that folks know to keep their distance.

MASK UP!

Although capacity limits have been removed and guidelines have shifted, masks are still recommended for those who are not vaccinated. Keep in mind that everyone needs to wear a mask when inside a healthcare facility, and that your agency or organization can ask folks to don a mask for your event. Make sure to have spare masks handy in case someone comes without!

COVID VACCINES

Let's be smart and encourage others to be the same. It's a good idea to partner with a local clinic or pharmacy to offer the COVID vaccine at any public event. It could attract more folks in the community who may not be familiar with your agency or the services you offer!

ENJOY THE OUTDOORS!

Having your event outdoors allows for folks to feel a little more comfortable, and is also a great way to enjoy the warmer weather. Just be prepared with some tents or a rain date on the off chance the weather doesn't cooperate!

OUTREACH

Not getting the same visibility from printing out copious amounts of flyers and pasting them around town? We encourage you to create social media posts and other short videos to increase your reach! Bonus points for throwing a little cash behind those promo posts to give yourself an even bigger boost.

COLLABORATION IS

Remember the saying, the more the merrier? There's no better way to signal to the community that your agency is a team player than by asking others to join in on the fun. Welcoming others to come aboard will create a better sense of community and, after being isolated all last year, we all need to come together.



UPCOMING MEETINGS

JUNE 14th

JULY 12th

AUGUST 9th

PLEASE NOTE:
Meetings are virtual until further notice.

Contact Michael Nogelo at Nogelo@xsector.com for a meeting invite!

If you or your agency has an initiative or practice you'd like to share in the next PPCT Providers' Corner, please let us know by contacting tedelmann@apexcc.org



Celebration of Life

Ronald Lee

1957-2021

CHPC Member and Ambassador



The CHPC community mourns the sudden passing of friend, colleague, and CHPC member Ronald Lee. Ron was the longest-tenured CHPC member, having served continuously from 2008 until his passing in March

2021. During that time, Ron demonstrated unwavering commitment to the CHPC mission and community, as he missed just five meetings in 13 years and served as the CHPC's unofficial Member Ambassador. In this role, Ron called several CHPC members each month to check on them and to encourage them to come to the next meeting, and he frequently greeted people as they arrived to meetings.

Ron leaves an indelible mark on the CHPC, Connecticut's HIV community, and everyone who knew him. He was a gentle, generous, and kind person. Some of the current and former CHPC members who knew him best share their remembrances of him here.

*A good friend. A quiet, gentle brotha of few words
- but who loudly advocated for HIV.*

- CARL FERRIS



Ron was a very nice person. He was a very dear and good friend to me. He always had a smile on his face. When I didn't think I could be a co-chair, he encouraged me. I'm going to really miss him. Rest in Peace.

- CLARA O'QUINN

Ron was an amazing person who always met you with a smile or kind word and was sincerely concerned with the welfare of others! Ron dedicated his time to being an active member of his community and advocate. He will be sorely missed!

- MELANIE ALVAREZ



Ron was one of my first clients when I began my career as a Medication Adherence Nurse and I learned so much from him about what it was like to live with HIV. Then 15 years later, Ron was assigned to be my Mentor when I became a new CHPC member. Talk about coming full circle. Rest in Peace my friend.

- DEBI LOMBARDO

Ron was a friend of mine. I introduced him to the CHPC, and he began to feel that people there really cared about him. That motivated him, and he cared about the meetings. That's what happens when you bring someone out of the dark and bring them into the light. The CHPC empowered him and made him feel cared for. You know he didn't miss any meetings, and he enjoyed calling people to remind them to come.

- ANN GALLOWAY JOHNSON

In Loving Memory of Pamela Parks

1982-2021

The CHPC community is saddened by the recent passing of former CHPC member Pamela Parks. To honor Pamela's life, we are re-publishing an article she wrote for the *HIV/AIDS Planning News & Notes* in 2015 in which she shared her personal story of surviving - and conquering - HIV stigma.



My story of surviving HIV stigma

By Pamela Parks

Imagine being 16 years old. Imagine getting sick and going to the hospital. Imagine the hospital telling you that you have HIV. Then imagine the hospital - people who take an oath to treat the sick - refusing to treat you.

I don't have to imagine it, because that is how I got my HIV diagnosis and learned about HIV stigma on the same day.

It was 1999 and I was in North Carolina. I got sick and the hospital saw my HIV diagnosis, refused to treat me, and sent me to Connecticut. I was so scared to find out I had HIV, and the hospital just sent me away when I needed help and support the most. And on top of that, I was extremely sick! When I got to Connecticut, someone at the Fair Haven Clinic took one look at me and sent me to the emergency room at Yale-New Haven Hospital. When I got there, I had a fever of 109 and they told me I had walking pneumonia. The doctors told me I would have died within 24 hours if I didn't get treated. Thanks to the Fair Haven Clinic and Yale-New Haven Hospital, three months later I was healthy and I knew how to take my HIV medications.

I was born with HIV. I was 16 - still a kid - when I found out, and I couldn't handle it. I was scared, angry, ashamed, and out of control. When people treated me badly, I thought there must be something wrong with me, and I lashed out at them. Slowly, though, with support from people like my Case Manager Ana Torres, I learned that the people who look at me and see HIV do not see who I really am. My disease does not define me. I am living my life and doing what I need to do. When people judge me or treat me badly now because of my HIV, I make sure that I am the bigger and better person. I have HIV, and I am not ashamed anymore.



Statewide HIV Awareness Day EVENTS

By Dante Gennaro, Jr.

Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC) Co-Chair and Health Communications Coordinator & Social Media Specialist, Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH)



How awesome would it be if HIV Prevention and Care sites across Connecticut hosted unified Awareness Day events around specific HIV Awareness Days? Imagine if, during this year's National HIV

Testing Day, there was an event in your community with a similar theme - regardless of where you lived. Well, that's our idea! CTDPH has taken on the challenge of organizing statewide events that correspond with selected HIV Awareness Days that impact Connecticut HIV focus populations.

Our goal is to unify as a state, share best practices, and choose a few awareness days each year to celebrate collaboratively - starting with National HIV Testing Day on June 27. I know most sites want to host an event, so let's come together to collaboratively plan a successful statewide celebration!

Planning discussions are taking place during monthly meetings of the CHPC Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC). MAC invites anyone who coordinates events for an HIV Prevention or Care site - or who has never planned an event but is interested in doing so - to join the discussions.

VIRTUAL MAC MEETINGS

take place at **11:00AM** on the
THIRD WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH
(click here for a Zoom link)

Please join us for the June 16 MAC meeting or contact me dante.gennaro@ct.gov or MAC support lead Michael Nogelo nogelo@xsector.com with questions or ideas.

CTDPH would love for its funded sites and partners across the state to come together so - after a year of isolation - clients, patients, and providers in Danbury, Willimantic, Stamford, Bridgeport, Hartford, New London, New Britain, New Haven, or anywhere else in the state can come out and celebrate with all of us together!





Connecticut Department
of Public Health

NEW, INJECTABLE HIV TREATMENT MEDICATION



Mitchell Namias, Pharm.D., AAHIVP

A new medication for the treatment of HIV is now available—and it's a once-a-month injection! Cabenuva was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on January 21, 2021. Cabenuva is a long-acting injectable medication and must be administered into the gluteal muscle by a healthcare provider once a month. Cabenuva is a combination of two medications, cabotegravir and rilpivirine. To qualify for Cabenuva treatment, you must be virally suppressed and have no known resistance to any HIV medications.

Before getting the injection of Cabenuva, you must take an oral version of the medication for at least one month to make sure it works for you. Studies have shown that Cabenuva is just as effective as your oral medication. Less than 2% of people taking Cabenuva may experience similar side effects to their current oral medications, such as: slight fever, fatigue, headache, nausea, dizziness, rash, and sleeping problems, in addition to possible temporary injection site pain.

If your healthcare provider determines Cabenuva is right for you, your current HIV medication will be switched for one month to two alternative oral medications before receiving your first injection. It is important to take the oral medication for one month to make sure it is right for you. Once that month is done, you will have a loading dose of the medication injected. After one month, a smaller maintenance dose will be injected every month during a monthly medical visit for your doctor to administer the medication. Cabenuva consists of two injections: one of cabotegravir and one of rilpivirine.

The HIV Care Program at CT DPH is excited to announce that Cabenuva was added to the Connecticut AIDS Drug Assistance Program (CADAP) formulary on April 28, 2021. Cabenuva is also fully covered by the Medicaid Preferred Drug Listing. Cabenuva is only available from certain specialty pharmacies and must be shipped directly to your healthcare provider so they can administer the medication for you.

For more information about Cabenuva, please visit www.cabenuva.com



CLICK HERE for the latest CT DPH guidance on COVID-19 vaccination, mask-wearing, and social distancing.

**DPH is an equal opportunity provider.
Call 860.509.7801 if you require
aid/accommodation to participate
fully and fairly.**

**Visit www.ct.gov/dph for requests for
proposals and other DPH information.**



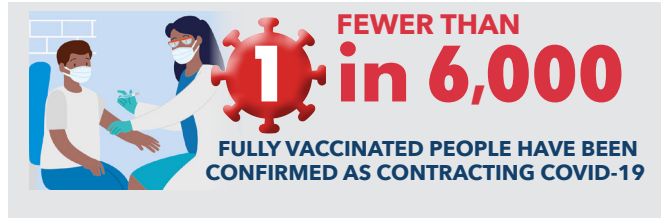
COVID VACCINE UPDATE

The March edition of the HIV/AIDS Planning News & Notes summarized a January presentation to the CHPC on HIV, COVID-19, and vaccinations by Connecticut Children's Medical Center Physician-in-Chief and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Juan Salazar. Just a few months later, more than half of all Connecticut residents - and almost 2 in 3 adults - have been fully vaccinated, but more work remains to put this pandemic behind us. The CHPC wanted to provide a vaccine update, therefore, in hopes that the data and facts will encourage everyone to protect themselves, their families, and their communities by getting vaccinated.

As of May 13, all individuals over the age of 12 who live, work, or attend school in Connecticut are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Though many residents have flocked at the opportunity to get protected, some were still skeptical of the vaccines' effectiveness and safety.

On May 7, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CTDPH) announced that the vaccine rollout is improving our prospects for moving beyond the pandemic.

According to CTDPH data through May 7:



The success of the vaccination roll-out has allowed life to start to return to normal, especially for fully-vaccinated people. On May 14, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that fully-vaccinated people no longer need to wear masks in public. On May 19, Governor Ned Lamont lifted all business restrictions and indoor masking mandates in restaurants, gyms, churches, and large events for fully-vaccinated Connecticut residents. Crowded indoor settings such as buses, planes, hospitals, prisons, and homeless shelters still require everyone to wear a mask.

With summer around the corner, we hope everyone takes full advantage of the benefits of being fully vaccinated - including dramatically reducing your chances of getting COVID-19 or of getting sick if you do contract the virus, as well as protecting your family and community.



CONNECTICUT HIV PLANNING CONSORTIUM

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NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Victor Acevedo
Gigi Chaux
Taylor Edelmann
Stephen Feathers
Carl Ferris
Dante Gennaro
Debra Lombardo
Clara O'Quinn



For details on how to **REGISTER FOR VACCINATION** when you are eligible, visit:
ct.gov/covidvaccine