



CHPC

CONNECTICUT HIV
PLANNING CONSORTIUM
866.972.2050

JUNE 2022

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:

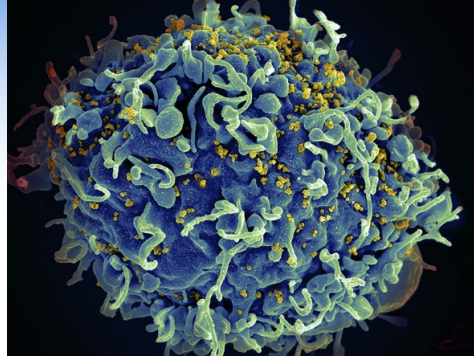
To create a coordinated statewide prevention and care system in which the rate of new HIV infections is reduced, and those who are living with and affected by HIV/AIDS are connected to appropriate care and support services.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Victor Acevedo
Stephen Feathers
Carl Ferris
Dante Gennaro
Charles Hardy

2022 Exciting for Research into an HIV Cure

By Winston, A., Jackson, S., and Demidont, A.C.



Recently, injectable medications cabotegravir and rilpivirine (Cabenuva), became available to treat HIV. For the first time, people have an option free from daily pills. While we are excited and grateful for this option, many continue to ask, **"WHAT ABOUT A CURE?"**

In 2009, the first case to achieve a functional cure from HIV (Berlin patient), a cisgender male, was treated for leukemia and experienced HIV remission for 12 years (now deceased from leukemia). The second case (London patient) is a cisgender male who was treated for Hodgkin's lymphoma and has been in HIV remission for more than 30 months. Both underwent bone marrow or adult stem cell transplants. In these cases, the donors' CD4 cells had a mutation, causing their CD4 cells to have natural immunity (no CCR5 receptor which HIV needs to bind to the cell).

In February 2022, a cisgender female became the third case (New York patient) to be cured from HIV. This patient underwent an adult stem cell and a cord blood stem cell transplant for leukemia. Her own blood cells were destroyed by high-dose chemotherapy prior to the transplant of new stem cells. She is now free of HIV for 14 months without HIV treatment. This patient is significant as she is the first female and the first multi-racial patient to achieve an apparent cure using cord stem cell transplants (Hsu, J., et al., 2022).

While promising, these costly, severe-side-effect-inducing methods are likely not practical to use as routine cures; however, they indicate that a cure can be found for HIV.

There are other methods under research. Gene therapy, such as the CRISPR-Cas9 technique, involves cutting and removal of specific sections of DNA containing HIV material (Shatto, 2022). Gene therapy, as well as Broadly Neutralizing Antibody therapy, are in later phase trials of their beginning stages; however, they are very promising as possible future cures. **Overall, this year has already produced encouraging research towards a cure!**

REFERENCES

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Shatto, Rachel. (2022). New DNA "cutting" technology may be a path to a cure. HIV Plus magazine. <https://www.hivplusmag.com/print-issue/2022/4/04>

CONNECTICUT HIV PLANNING

CONSORTIUM UPDATE

Ending
the
HIV
Epidemic

The time is now.



2022-2026 INTEGRATED HIV PLAN DEVELOPMENT

By 2030, Connecticut intends to reach an aspirational goal of fewer than 25 new HIV diagnoses each year! To reach this goal, prevention and care partners in our state must work together more effectively and efficiently to implement strategies that are working and to introduce new strategies that address gaps and needs.

The 2022-2026 Integrated HIV Plan (IHP) will serve as our road map to end the HIV epidemic and coordinate work across diverse HIV-related prevention and care partners. At this stage of the process, CHPC committees are outlining strategies to expand the dialogue and information sharing between partners. For example, the Ryan White Part A Planning Councils have shared data presentations during recent Needs Assessment Projects (NAP) Team meetings. These discussions will help the CHPC describe the different needs across the state, and will allow NAP to identify gaps in conducting needs assessments. One gap to be addressed in the IHP relates to conducting a prevention needs assessment.

The Ending the Syndemic (ETS) Committee serves as the vehicle to promote service integration beyond HIV prevention and care and into sexually transmitted infections (STIs), hepatitis, and substance use disorders (SUDs). This syndemic

approach represents a new way of service delivery. Recent ETS meetings have focused on formalizing a hub model that assembles relevant services in an easy-to-access format for patients and providers. These hubs will support the implementation of new routine HIV testing guidelines in Connecticut and help raise viral suppression rates in people with HIV (PWH) who are seen in private medical settings to at least the same rates as PWH who are connected to Ryan White-funded care providers.

The Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC) explores ways to strengthen dialogue at the community level and has begun working with Ryan White Planning Councils to share best practices to engage PWH. The Positive Prevention Connecticut (PPCT) group is working to develop statewide awareness campaigns to help advance IHP strategies. The Quality and Performance Measures (QPM) Team continues to revise and update CHPC indicators and will develop a more robust process for the CHPC to monitor progress on plan implementation.

During the summer, the Executive Committee will take the lead in assembling all of these pieces into an IHP that describes the strategies Connecticut will use to end the HIV epidemic. CHPC members and partners will participate in refining the plan prior to its approval by the CHPC and submission to the federal government in the fall. Contribute to the plan development process by attending a CHPC or committee meeting. Many hands make light work!

THE CHPC IS LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS

who are committed to the CHPC's HIV care and prevention mission and can attend meetings from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm on the third Wednesday of each month.

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY TODAY!](#)

UPCOMING VIRTUAL CHPC Meetings

July 20th | August 17th | Sept 21st | 9:10 am

[Click here for the Meeting Link](#)



HIV/AIDS AWARENESS DAY RALLY



Alliance for Living Director of Housing Frank Silva


On April 25, 2022, advocates from around the state rallied at the State Capitol for the annual HIV/AIDS Awareness Day. The rally was held three years since the last one due to COVID.

Guests heard inspirational words from several speakers, including Advancing Connecticut Together (ACT) CEO John Merz, who remembered longtime rally organizer Shawn Lang (see page 6); Barry Walters from A Place to Nourish your Health (APNH), who discussed the new Universal Testing bill; and U.S. Senator Chris Murphy and Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin, who both encouraged the crowd to keep up the good work of advocacy. Kia Baird from OutCT, Frank Silva from Alliance for Living, and two persons with lived experience spoke about the value of HIV services in Connecticut.

Vicki Veltri from the Connecticut Office of Health Strategy closed the rally by reminding folks to “go out and change the world” as Shawn Lang would always say at the annual event. Thanks to all who attended this year's rally!



U.S. Senator Chris Murphy



MONKEYPOX ADVISORY

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), multiple cases of monkeypox have been reported in several countries that don't normally report monkeypox, including the United States. Monkeypox cases have been reported in two of Connecticut's bordering states: As of June 14, 2022, 4 cases had been reported in Massachusetts, 15 cases had been reported in New York, and 1 case had been reported in Rhode Island. Anyone who has been in close contact with someone who has monkeypox is at risk.

Although Connecticut has not yet identified any cases, the State Department of Public Health (DPH) is monitoring the situation, and has released the following Monkeypox 101 flyer to educate the public on monkeypox and how to stay safe.

MONKEYPOX 101

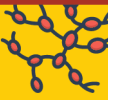
LET'S STAY SAFE THIS SUMMER

01



Monkeypox virus is in the poxvirus family, which include the smallpox virus.

02



Monkeypox symptoms include: muscle aches, swollen lymph nodes, fever, headaches, and rash.

03

Within one to three days after a fever, Monkeypox is characterized by a rash of pustules that can commonly be found on the face, hands, feet, eyes, mouth and/or, genitals.



Pustules

04



Anyone can contract monkeypox. Monkeypox spreads through respiratory droplets, close physical contact, touching sores or body fluids, or touching personal belongings that have made contact with sores.

05



If you have symptoms, talk with a healthcare provider, isolate at home, avoid any close physical contact, and wear a mask when around others. The virus is able to resolve on its own after two to four weeks.



VISIT [CDC.GOV/POXVIRUS/MONKEYPOX](https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox)
FOR MORE INFORMATION



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.



CONNECTICUT PASSES ROUTINE HIV TESTING LAW



On May 23, 2022, Governor Ned Lamont signed House Bill 5500 into law, making universal, routine, opt-out HIV testing the law of the land in Connecticut. This law marks a big step towards ending new HIV infections and ending the HIV epidemic in Connecticut.

Why is this such a big deal? Knowing your HIV status informs healthcare options for prevention and treatment. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 15% of people with HIV don't know they are infected. Studies show that those who learn they are HIV positive change their behavior to reduce the risk of HIV transmission. Normalizing HIV testing for everyone will also reduce stigma and help healthcare professionals and patients talk about sexual health.

As of January 1, 2023, Connecticut primary care providers such as physicians, advanced practice registered nurses, and physician assistants who provide primary care services and their designees must offer HIV tests to all patients 13 or older. Patients have the right to decline testing. Providers do not have to

offer testing if they believe the patient: a) is being treated for a life-threatening emergency; b) has previously been offered or received an HIV test; or c) is not capable of consenting to an HIV test. The law gives hospitals until January 1, 2024 to develop protocols for implementing routine HIV testing in all areas, including Emergency Departments.

Passing this law is just the first step in the process! Our work now turns to increasing awareness about routine HIV testing for healthcare providers and patients. This includes developing campaigns, resource materials, provider education, and access to resources for individuals who may test positive for HIV. The CHPC's Positive Prevention CT committee will play an important role in awareness campaigns. An ad hoc work group will assemble to develop other information resources for patients and providers and to explore how states like Florida, New York, and Texas promote routine HIV testing best practices.

For more information or to get involved, contact Barry Walters (barry.walters@apnh.org) or Gina D'Angelo (gina.dangelo@ct.gov).

Shawn Lang (1956-2021)

In Memoriam



Shawn Lang, former Deputy Director at Advancing Connecticut Together (ACT), spent her entire career as an advocate for persons living with HIV and AIDS and the LGBTQ community, as well as those with opioid addiction, survivors of domestic violence, and those experiencing housing insecurity. Promoting harm reduction was a special passion of hers and she relished chairing the Statewide Overdose Workgroup since its inception. Her list of accomplishments is long. One honor she especially cherished was being recognized at the White House as a Champion of Change for Advancing Prevention, Treatment and Recovery in 2016.

Throughout her career, Shawn worked tirelessly for programs, policies, and state and federal legislation that provided harm reduction and sexual health services and protections for persons in need, especially persons living with HIV. She relished the role of rabble-rouser. Activist. Or, as she called herself, "compassionate warrior." Whenever she spoke at a rally at the State Capitol, she reminded those in attendance that "This is your house!"

Shawn's friends have created the Shawn Lang Task Force for the creation of the Connecticut AIDS Memorial that we hope to unveil on her birthday, February 5, 2023.

Visit <https://givebutter.com/ctaidsmemorial> for more information or to contribute.

Shawn's tagline was "*Go out and change the world.*" So, in her name and to honor her, we must all go out and change the world.

department of public health

corner



Connecticut Department
of Public Health



By Venesha Heron
Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinator/
In-home HIV Test Kit Initiative Lead

In 2016, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that over 3 million Americans were living with a viral hepatitis C or B infection; those numbers continue to rise. Since **MAY WAS HEPATITIS AWARENESS MONTH** and **MAY 19 WAS HEPATITIS TESTING DAY**, the CT DPH HIV/HCV Prevention Program collaborated with the City of Hartford and the Greater Hartford Ryan White Part A Programs to host "One Big Statewide HCV Testing Event," which sought to spread awareness, reduce stigma and discrimination, and increase testing. Due to bad weather, the event fell short of its goal to screen 600 people for hepatitis C (also called "Hep C" or "HCV"), but it was still a success. People from all walks of life, including undocumented folks, were educated about viral hepatitis and screened for Hep C - a viral infection that affects the liver.

Fourteen agencies from Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, New Britain, Bristol, Bridgeport, Danbury, and other cities participated. 35 of the 153 people who learned their Hep C status had a preliminary antibody positive (reactive result). Twenty-two of these 35 people were linked for a

same-day, follow-up confirmatory test. Regarding their risk for acquiring Hep C, 43 of the 153 people screened identified as people who inject or use drugs, and 38 were millennials (who make up 37% of Connecticut's new Hep C infections). Those who were screened received #HepFreeCT tote bags, water bottles, and umbrellas, and a \$10 gift card to Wendy's or Subway. [Click here for a press release with more information on the event.](#)

Hep C educational materials developed for the **CT DPH VIRAL HEP C SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN** were disseminated statewide and at the event. The campaign seeks to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with Hep C and promote elimination of this virus. The campaign's main messages include:

- **Hep C can be treated and cured. Over 90% of people with Hep C are cured with just 8-12 weeks of treatment.**
- **Hep C treatments are covered by most Medicaid and Medicare policies, and major private insurers.**
- **Let's silence stigma. Get Tested. Seek Treatment. Get Cured. An end to Hep C in CT is in sight!**

Campaign materials can be found on the End the Syndemic CT website. Together we can eliminate viral hepatitis! #HepFreeCT

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.

