



Membership & Awareness Committee
July 20, 2022 Meeting Summary



Date: July 20, 2022

Location: Virtual Meeting **Time:** 11:03 a.m. – 12:34 p.m.

Attendance: CHPC Members: Victor Acevedo, Melanie Alvarez, Stephen Feathers, Carl Ferris, Dante Gennaro, Charles Hardy

CHPC Staff: Michael Nogelo

Meeting Accomplishments

1. The group approved the June Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC) meeting summary.
2. The group planned the article topics and possible authors for the September newsletter.
3. The group discussed efforts to engage support groups in various communities.
4. The group agreed upon strategies to increase the engagement of people with HIV (PWH) in the CHPC.
5. The group planned for the CHPC's annual Voice of the People panel scheduled for October.
6. The group reviewed membership issues and agreed on member retention and recruitment activities.

Identified Tasks

1. Staff will coordinate the production of a draft newsletter for review at the August MAC meeting.
 2. Melanie Alvarez and Carl Ferris will, with support from staff, record an interview as a companion to the newsletter articles they will contribute.
 3. Staff and MAC members will schedule support group visits between August 18 and September 20.
 4. Staff will ask CHPC leaders for guidance about topics to be addressed with support groups.
 5. Staff will draft a proposal for increasing participation stipends for CHPC members who are not paid by their job for attending CHPC meetings.
 6. Staff will create a Voice of the People potential panelist questionnaire and will share the questionnaire and other relevant language with Dante Gennaro.
 7. Mr. Gennaro will engage Positive Prevention CT to create a Voice of the People flyer.
 8. Staff will email the CHPC member diversity chart to MAC members.
 9. Mr. Ferris will make member retention calls, as needed.
 10. Staff will issue attendance warning and dismissal letters to CHPC members, as needed.
 11. Mr. Gennaro and staff will initiate agreed-upon member recruitment activities.
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A. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Membership and Awareness Committee (MAC) chair Stephen Feathers called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m. and welcomed committee members. All participants introduced themselves.

B. JUNE MEETING SUMMARY

The group approved the June MAC meeting summary by consensus, with no changes.

C. SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER PLANNING

Mr. Feathers said MAC produces a newsletter three times each year. The group would need to plan the articles and possible authors for the September newsletter. The CHPC Update and the Department of Public Health (DPH) Corner are two standing articles, and Positive Prevention CT (PPCT) will provide one page of content for the Provider's Corner. That leaves space for roughly five more articles. Mr. Feathers asked the group to discuss what should be in those five articles. The group agreed that:

- Melanie Alvarez and Carl Ferris would collaborate on two articles related to HIV, HIV-related stigma, and housing: Ms. Alvarez writing from the perspective of a service provider and Mr. Ferris from the perspective of a community member.
- Staff will suggest to DPH that the DPH Corner article provide an update on DPH activities related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and reducing health disparities.
- Peta-Gaye Nembhard will be asked to write an article on Hartford's approach to ensuring stable housing for PWH.
- Alixe Dittmore will be invited to contribute an article related to Overdose Awareness Day (August 31) and National Recovery Month (September). Joanne Montgomery will be asked to draft an article on this topic if Ms. Dittmore is unable to do so.
- Staff will draft a World AIDS Day (December 1) preview article or text box.
- An article on new injectable HIV medication may be sought, if appropriate and if space permits.

The group agreed that Ms. Alvarez and Mr. Ferris would, with support from staff, record an interview as a companion to their articles, with a link to the recording included in the newsletter.

Mr. Feathers said staff would coordinate the production of a draft newsletter for review at the August MAC meeting.

D. SUPPORT GROUP OUTREACH

Mr. Feathers said MAC is supporting the development of the new Integrated Plan by connecting with support groups to get community input into the important issues that should be addressed in the Plan and to get community feedback as the Plan develops. MAC representatives have reached out to several agencies and specific support groups to determine their interest in having a MAC leader visit them a couple times during the year to ask for their input on topics related to the plan. Mr. Feathers met with an MPowerment group in Hartford in April. Mr. Nogelo met with a Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) in Meriden in early July. Mr. Nogelo met with CHPC member Marcelin Joseph in mid-July to discuss the possibility of engaging with a GBAPP men's group in Bridgeport. Approvals for this visit are in process.



Mr. Nogelo has also reached out to several other agencies and support groups in New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and Fairfield County, but has not had any luck scheduling visits. Mr. Nogelo and Mr. Feathers will try to schedule initial or follow-up visits between the August CHPC meeting (when drafts of the Plan goals and objectives will be available) and the September CHPC meeting (when CHPC members will vote to approve the goals and objectives). Mr. Nogelo will ask CHPC leaders for guidance about what Plan elements they need feedback on or what specific questions they would like input.

E. DISCUSSION OF EFFORTS TO ENGAGE PEOPLE WITH HIV (PWH)

Mr. Feathers said that, in May, Rich Radocchia and Gigi Chaux from the New Haven/Fairfield (NH/FF) Ryan White Planning Council (RWPC) joined the MAC meeting to share ways that the CHPC and the RWPC work to engage PWH in planning processes. In June, Danielle Warren-Dias from the Hartford RWPC joined MAC to discuss how the Hartford RWPC engages PWH. The group reviewed a list of the strategies that emerged from these discussions to determine if any of the strategies should be adopted by the CHPC.

- *NH/FF RWPC strategy: All membership applicants must attend a Planning Council meeting and a committee meeting before being accepted as a member.*
 - Mr. Ferris expressed support for this idea.
 - Mr. Feathers noted that this was not feasible when the CHPC met in person because CHPC funds could not be used to transport people who could not travel to meetings.
 - Mr. Nogelo expressed support for the idea to reduce the number of new members who take a membership slot but never engage in the CHPC. Mr. Nogelo suggested asking CHPC leaders to explore the possibility of providing funding for transportation for applicants.
 - Ms. Alvarez said it is important for potential members to understand what they are getting into.
 - The group agreed that a requirement for CHPC applicants to attend one meeting prior to being accepted as members should be pursued.
- *NH/FF RWPC strategy: Committees meet on different days than Planning Council meetings due to feedback that having all meetings on one day was too exhausting and to allow people to attend multiple committee meetings, if they wish to do so.*
 - Charles Hardy noted that transportation would be a challenge to attending meetings on multiple days each month if meetings return to being in person.
 - Mr. Nogelo pointed out that the CHPC being a statewide group makes transportation more difficult for the CHPC as compared to the RWPCs.
 - Ms. Alvarez said the CHPC may never return to fully in-person meetings, in which case transportation would not be an issue. She added, however, that the Hartford RWPC meeting schedule makes it difficult to attend meetings.
 - The group recommended no changes to CHPC and committee meeting schedules.
- *Hartford RWPC strategy: Fast-track membership for applicants from underrepresented populations.*



- Mr. Feathers noted that the CHPC onboards new members once per year to allow for an annual group orientation but noted that the current process risks causing people who apply early in the year to lose interest by the fall.
- Mr. Nogelo noted that the process of matching new members with mentors also lends itself to new members being onboarded once per year.
- *Hartford RWPC strategy: Pay the lost wages of members who miss work to attend meetings if they receive a letter from the employer with wage information.*
 - The group agreed that community members should be paid a flat amount that does not depend on the income they forego to attend CHPC meetings, and that the current CHPC stipend amount of \$40 for attending a CHPC meeting and committee meeting (\$25 for attendance and \$15 for food) should be increased.
 - Mr. Gennaro pledged to ask DPH leaders for additional funding to support this strategy, if additional funding is required.
 - Mr. Nogelo will draft a 1-page proposal for increasing participation stipends for CHPC members who are community members and who are not paid by their job for attending CHPC meetings. MAC will review the proposal during its August meeting.
 - The group agreed that the proposal should include: a) Multiple stipend levels and the cost implications of each level; and b) Choices for members (e.g., physical gift cards, cash, or e-gift cards; check or Venmo).

F. VOICE OF THE PEOPLE PANEL PLANNING

Mr. Feathers said the CHPC is planning to host the annual “Voice of the People” panel discussion in October. This is an opportunity for the CHPC to hear directly from PWH and other consumers of HIV prevention services. In June, MAC suggested that the panel could expand from focusing on HIV to reflect the Integrated Plan’s syndemic approach (to include substance use, hepatitis, and STDs), and that themes might include: a) Stigma, especially related to healthcare for minority communities; and b) The mental health challenges of dealing with COVID on top of living with HIV. MAC also suggested using a recruitment and panelist questionnaire process similar to the process that worked well in 2021. Mr. Feathers said the CHPC leadership expressed support for MAC’s suggestions.

- Mr. Gennaro volunteered to engage PPCT to develop a flyer to use to recruit potential panelists and to promote the panel.
- Mr. Nogelo said he would create a potential panelist questionnaire and would share the questionnaire and other relevant language with Mr. Gennaro for inclusion in the flier.

G. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Mr. Feathers said MAC is responsible for member retention. Sometimes MAC members call CHPC members who have missed meetings to encourage them to come and to check on them.

- Mr. Feathers reported that he spoke with Xavier Day, who said he missed the June meeting because of a work-related conference, and who attended the July main meeting.
- Mr. Ferris reported that he left a voicemail for Reggie Knox, who also attended the July meeting.



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Mr. Feathers explained that members receive a warning after their second absence and are dismissed after their third absence in a calendar year. The group reviewed the 2022 attendance chart and agreed that a member retention call and member attendance warning letter would be issued to Bob Sideleau.

- Mr. Gennaro asked about the possibility of identifying work-related absences so they can be excused.
- Mr. Feathers explained that all CHPC members have two excused absences each year for any reason, but MAC has never attempted to judge which absences are justified and which are not.
- Mr. Ferris volunteered to call Mr. Sideleau to check on him and encourage him to come to the August meeting.

Mr. Feathers said there was not enough time to go through the member diversity chart.

- Mr. Nogelo agreed to email the diversity chart to the MAC members.
- Mr. Gennaro said he would share the diversity chart with DPH contract managers and ask them to encourage their outreach, testing, and linkage (OTL) staff to discuss the CHPC with individuals they encounter in the community who would help address gaps in CHPC membership.
- Mr. Nogelo said he would reach out to individuals who have attended several CHPC meetings in 2022 to encourage them to apply and to challenge them to invite a PWH from their community to apply.

H. PROCESS CHECK

Mr. Feathers asked the group for feedback on the meeting.

- Mr. Gennaro said it was nice to see everyone's face after several months away from the MAC.

I. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Feathers thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 12:34 p.m.