

Community Involvement Activities Committee

MEETING SUMMARY

The Planning Council believes that the voice of the community is paramount. The purpose of the CIAs is to help bridge the gap between the community and service providers by creating opportunities to involve community members in the planning process. In addition, community members will receive crucial updates on changes in the Ryan White and related health/social services.

Thursday, January 9, 2020, 5-7PM
Willing Heart Community Center
555 Martin Luther King Blvd. Newark, NJ 07102

1. Welcome and Moment of Silence

Warren Poole, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:14 PM and welcomed all in attendance. A moment of silence was observed for all those living with, those who have passed, and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

2. Mission statement & Ground rules

Poole read the committee's mission statement and reminded all attendees about the Ground Rules previously agreed on. Poole explained that the Planning Council allocates Ryan White Part A funds for 5 counties in the EMA area and is interested in hearing from people affected by HIV/AIDS who do not work for a Ryan White funded agency. All attendees were encouraged to be part of the CIA Committee and the Planning Council.

3. Public Testimony

There was no Public Testimony

4. Approval of Last Meeting's Summary

The meeting summary was approved by members.

5. Ryan White Part A Updates

-The Continuum of Care Committee recently approved the new format of the Housing Standards of Care. The Standards of Care ensure that all Ryan White service providers offer the same level of service or care across a service category. The Housing Standard of Care was introduced at the Planning Council last week and will be approved at the next Planning Council on February 19th. The public testimony at PC meetings can be used to address any issues or concerns.

-The Research and Evaluation Committee is working on the 2020 Needs Assessment with an emphasis on Housing. This topic was chosen in consideration of the focus on Housing on the EtE and the need for housing services in the Newark EMA. To complete the Needs Assessment, the REC will use surveys and consumers focus groups. All attendees were encouraged to participate on the focus groups and surveys to provide their input on housing issues.

6. Old Business

PC Support Staff reminded the committee that in November, members recommended the following topics for future CIA meetings: HIV Criminal Laws, Housing, Updates on the Cure for HIV, Long-Term Survivors, Transportation, and Emotional Support Animals. Attendees were asked to suggest additional topics. No other topic was suggested.

7. New Business

- a. **Speaker/Presenter: HIV Decriminalization** (Axel Torres Marrero & Wesley McWhite)
Wesley McWhite is the Policy Associate and HIV Counselor of Hyacinth and the State Coordinator for AIDS Watch. Axel Torres Marrero is the Director of Public Policy & Legal Services of Hyacinth.

Both presenters were invited to provide an overview of HIV criminalization laws that may impact the lives of PLWHA.

- The 2020 AIDS Watch scheduled for March 30th and 31st were mentioned as important dates for legislative matters. All attendees were encouraged to stay informed about the latest laws at the local and state level too.
- The presenters reminded attendees that at the World AIDS Day in 2018 Governor Murphy called on stakeholders to join the Department of Health to work strategically to end the HIV/AIDS Epidemic by 2025. There were 4 listening sessions held throughout New Jersey. There was a town hall meeting at Broadway House and community members provided their input. A taskforce to End the HIV Epidemic was formed with community members, NJDOH, Community-Based Organizations, Healthcare Providers, Academic/Researchers and Advocates. The New Jersey Plan to End the HIV Epidemic by 2025 was submitted to the Governor's and it still has not been approved. Once the plan is released from the Governor's office, the community's input will be needed.
- As an example, the presenters mentioned New York City's plan to End The Epidemic Plan by 2020. So far, NY has less than 200 new diagnoses and met their goal in 2019.
- Advocacy efforts are great in Newark but input on what else must be included in the EtE Plan is still needed. For example: The EtE plan currently does not address the housing voucher issues. Therefore, the community could provide input to address this issue by attending and speaking at the community forums.
- The Criminalization of HIV Transmission: This has been an issue for a long time since there are current laws that do not reflect the advances in Science. The current laws were created as a response of other states passing similar legislations at a time where HIV was known to be deadly, and no medication was known to treat the virus effectively.
 - Current NJ Legislation: N.J.S.A 2C:34-5 in conjunction with N.J.S.A. 2C:14-1 do not consider the Antiretroviral Therapy, Undetectable = Untransmutable, PrEP, and PEP. Therefore, these laws do not reflect the science of treatment and transmission. The Senate is not aware of the Science behind HIV care and treatment and transmission and it is not aware that Undetectable = Untransmutable.
 - These statutes have been used only 7 to 11 times because it is difficult to prove a case with them and other criminal statutes can be used. It was recommended to legislators to get rid of part b of N.J.S.A 2C:34-5 or amend the statute by including an actual exposure of the HIV virus. It was recommended to not prosecute using these statutes since they are an active barrier to testing and perpetuate HIV-related stigma, and other states have taken steps to eliminate them.

- Axel Torres Marrero asked for testimonies on how these laws affect People Living with HIV. One of the attendee's husband disclosed their serodiscordant status to their health care provider. She mentioned her HIV count has been undetectable for over 18 years. Therefore, the virus would not be transmitted to her husband. However, the provider recommended them to write a notarized letter stating that her husband is informed of her HIV status and consents to having a sexual relationship. She mentioned that despite having the notarized letter, she still is at risk of going to jail because of how the laws are written.
- Members were informed that laws can be discussed when community input is requested. For instance, conversations could be held in discussions about the EtE plan or by attending community town hall/forums. Or consumers have the right to ask for a meeting with their legislative representatives or members of the congress to provide their input on issues.
- All attendees were informed that it is their right to give their input on issues that affect them such as pre-authorizations, the HOPWA Program or housing assistance programs that can benefit the EtE Plan. In fact, the presenters mentioned that the EtE plan might have a town hall meeting in the summer. They added that if the meeting will not come from the Governor's office, Hyacinth, NJCRI and Broadway house will host the town hall meeting and send the input to the Governor's office.

b. Review NEMA's 2020-2021 Meeting Calendar.

All attendees received and reviewed the NEMA Planning Council and Committee's 2020-2021 Meeting Calendar.

8. Announcements

The following announcements were made:

- There will be a luncheon on February 14 at the Sr. Michael Medical Center. Registration sign in sheet was passed around.
- There was a presentation on AIDS Watch regarding laws that consider a felony when a deceased person gets involved in a fight.
- The Church of Christ will be supplying care packages and winter clothing at the Boys and Girls Club of Newark on January 24, 2020 from 2 pm until 5pm. Flyers were distributed, and all were encouraged to attend.
- Michael L. Johnson, a gay athlete convicted of not disclosing his HIV. status to sexual partners, was released 25 years early. He was arrested in 2013 and sentenced to 30 years in prison. Michael L. Johnson will share his story through advocacy organizations like the Ryan White Planning Council in Indiana and advocate to update laws that unfairly penalize people with HIV.

9. Next meeting

The next CIA/CC meeting will be held on February 26, 2020 at 5 pm at the Willing Heart Community Center located at 555 Martin Luther King Blvd. Newark NJ 07102.

10. Adjournment

This meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.

