



**Research & Evaluation Committee
MEETING SUMMARY**

Monday, October 16, 2023, from 10:05 AM to 11:59 AM.

Videoconference via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89756434893>

Teleconference: (929) 205 6099 / Meeting ID: 897 5643 4893

PRESENT	EXCUSED	UNEXCUSED
1. Corey DeStefano (Vice-Chair) 2. Kasny Damas (Secretary) 3. Warren Poole 4. Natalie Muhammad 5. Ann Bagchi, PhD/DNP (Chair) 6. Sharon Postel (Non-Voting) *	7. Debbie Mohammed 8. Corey Destefano (Vice-Chair)	

Guests: Ashley Bramble, Micheal Hager, Denise Brown

PC Support Staff: Roberto Benoit

1. Welcome and Moment of Silence

- Damas called this meeting to order at 10:05 AM. A moment of silence was observed for all those living with, those who have passed, and those affected by HIV/AIDS.

2. Roll Call

- Support Staff conducted roll call. Quorum was established.

3. Public Testimony

- The committee was joined by Micheal Hager from “My voice Our Stories” who gave brief updates on upcoming projects:
- Hager discussed the upcoming Story Slam event, which will feature personal stories from older black women in the Newark area, along with books created by 12 other women reflecting on their life experiences. This event will take place on November 8, 2023, start time from 12pm - 1:30pm.
- Due to religious beliefs, the storytellers will be represented through illustrations or stand-ins instead of photography or videotaping.
- Michael also presented an ongoing project to create a code book for qualitative data analysis, with the help of student reviewers, to identify key factors from the stories for public planning.
- Hager introduced a new project aimed at maximizing positive outcomes and addressing negative experiences, with a focus group to be introduced once the code book is ready.

4. Approval of the Meeting Summaries from July 17th and August 21st

- The meeting summary from July 17 and August 21st was sent out electronically. Damas made a motion to approve the meeting summary and Bagchi seconded. The motion was properly moved and seconded. Both meeting summaries were passed

5. Standing Committee Updates

Continuum of Care (COC) – Support Staff provided the update.

- The COC committee last met on October 12, 2023.
- The committee Reviewed/ Updated the Foodbank and Home Delivered Meals Service Standard.
- The next COC meeting will be held on Friday, November 9, 2023, at 10AM via Zoom.

Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) – Support Staff provided the update.

- The CPC last met on September 8, 2023.
- Review of Progress Report Performance on the goals/objectives of the 2022-2026 Integrated Prevention and Care Plan
- Postel briefly updated the committee on her attendance of the HRSA & CDC meeting regarding the evaluation of the 2022-2026 Integrated Plan, held on October 3.
 - Postel presented results and updates on the progress reports. HRSA and CDC officials were very pleased with the results but still mentioned that there were a couple of things that must be done.
 - Firstly, the committee must do an annual update of the Integrated Plan. This will be taking place next year, 2024. Postel is currently unsure of what the scope will be; further discussions within the CPC will determine what the scope will be.
 - Secondly, CDC & HRSA requested that the committee receive more input from consumers, specifically to priority populations. This will also be a focus in 2024.
- The next CPC meeting will be held on Friday October 13, 2023, at 9:30am via Zoom.

Community Involvement Activities Committee (CIA) – Support Staff provided the update.

- The CIA last met on August 23, 2023.
- The September CIA meeting was cancelled.
- The next CIA meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 25, 2023 at 5PM via Zoom.

Nominations Committee (NC) – Support Staff provided the update.

- The NC last met on Wednesday, August 9, 2023, at 6 PM via Zoom.
- The September and October NC meetings were canceled due to the completion of all urgent tasks.
- The next NC meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, at 6 PM via Zoom.

6. Old Business

○ Review/Update on FY 23 Administrative Mechanism Annual Process and Grant Award Updates

- Postel explained that the process, which is conducted annually, is mandated by Federal law and is a part of the planning council's mandate.
- Postel noted that the Hyacinth Grant award for Ryan White is now on a three-year basis, with funding issued annually based on availability and Congressional appropriation.
- The recipient issues requests for proposals every three years and conducts annual updates and non-competing continuation (NCC) applications.

- Postal highlighted that improvements were made by the Ryan White unit in Newark, including a timely issuance of an initial notice of award and an improvement in the approval process for municipal Council to accept the funds. However, a change in the program director and new staff at the Ryan White unit caused a brief internal delay.
 - Postal also mentioned that there were no new subrecipients contracted for services as there were already enough subrecipients providing services.
 - Finally, Postal outlined the process for contract execution, which takes approximately two and a half months from procurement to contract execution.
 - Postal discussed the issue of unexpended funds totaling \$450,000 due to staff vacancies and turnover in the recipient's office and subrecipients program.
 - Bagchi clarified that the unspent funds were from both the recipient and subrecipients.
 - Postel noted that this issue was exacerbated by the pandemic and resulted in agencies having funding but no staff to provide services. However, measures including the appointment of a new project director and the redistribution of funds were being taken to address the situation. Despite these efforts, there will still be a balance to carry over.
 - Postel also announced a shortening of the deadline for submitting final expenditure reports and increased monitoring of spending to ensure all funds were spent by the end of February 2024.
 - The monitoring template for various agencies was also discussed, with conditions of award being met by the deadlines.
- **Review/Update on FY 23 Needs Assessment**
 - Postel discussed key highlights of the FY 23 Needs Assessment:
 - **Linkage to Care Delayed by Many Clients.**
 - Postal highlighted that 67 out of 77 clients were not linked to care within one month of diagnosis, with significant percentages being uninsured and living in transitional housing.
 - Postal also discussed issues related to hospital and patient data, including cases where patients were not getting connected within the system and an unknown agency adding a home test kit.
 - It was noted that there was a need for corrective action to ensure that clients receive medical care promptly, and that some clients had other health issues, family issues, or were incarcerated, which affected their linkage to care.
 - **Systemic Barriers and Medical Care Challenges**
 - Postel and Bagchi discussed the challenges faced by their agency, primarily related to systemic barriers. Sharon highlighted several factors causing delays in medical care, including data entry errors, miscommunication, late scheduling of appointments, and client-related issues. However, Postal noted that the requirement for charity care documentation could be a potential barrier for some clients.
 - Postel also shared that five out of six hospital-based clinics would see a newly diagnosed individual without an ID, while one clinic would not.

- The discussion also covered the services provided by Saint John's Church, with Postel suggesting that the church might be able to offer some form of assistance.
- Complete Review/Update of Calendar/Workplan for FY 2023-2024
 - The committee reviewed the calendar work plan and discussed upcoming reports and deliverables.

7. New Business

• Review 2023 Epi Profile

- Postel presented new data on the diagnosis of a certain condition, focusing on trends over the past 10-11 years.
- Postel highlighted that there was a decrease in new diagnoses in 2020 due to the pandemic, but an increase in 2021.
- Postel also discussed the demographic breakdown of the newly diagnosed, noting that over a third were Hispanic/Latino and over half were male. She also discussed the distribution of newly diagnosed by age and county of residence.
- Bagchi contributed to the discussion by examining the trends in the data.
- Bagchi and Postel discussed the need to delve deeper into understanding newly diagnosed individuals.
- Postel noted that about 6,400 Ryan white clients total of which 500 are considered new, but the destination of these individuals is unknown.
- Damask brought up the possibility of individuals from other countries or states migrating to New Jersey for better care.
- Muhammad added that they have been seeing a significant number of immigrants who are already aware of their status and are new to the Ryan White program.
- Bagchi pointed out that there has been a substantial influx of refugees from places like El Salvador, which could account for some of these new cases.
- Damask mentioned a law passed by Biden to aid individuals from various countries, including Haiti, which could also contribute to the increase. While Postel agreed that the HRSA report includes a unique client identifier and probably lists race and ethnicity, she was unsure if it included country of origin.
- Muhammad concluded the discussion by suggesting that they should dig deeper into the issue, including those born and raised in the US. Muhammad and Bagchi discussed the need for deeper understanding of behaviors among those diagnosed. Muhammad noted that while some people may no longer require support, others will continue to need help due to ongoing behaviors. They also discussed the potential for long-term involvement in treatment programs, with Muhammad questioning why some individuals must remain on these programs for extended periods.
- The team discussed the need for more detailed demographic data for better understanding and response to the health issue.
- Postel proposed adjusting the timeline for certain reports to allow for a faster and more effective response.

• Update on the Quality Improvement Plan and benchmarks

- Bramble discussed the most utilized services under Part A, including outpatient ambulatory healthcare services and Medical Case Management.

- For EHE, the top services were the housing opportunities for priority populations, ambassador case management, and the community health worker program.
- In the last fiscal year, the Ryan White part A and MAI Program served 5,906 clients, while the EHE Program served 1,287.
- Bramble proposed the performance goals for FY22, noting that the lowest result was the NCM Care Plan, which she is focused on improving. She also discussed the prescription of ARV and the need for timely submission of data to avoid data errors. After correcting data errors, the rate of clients linked to care increased back to 76%.
- Bramble concluded by highlighting the success of agency-specific projects in improving the effectiveness of the program and the need for continuous monitoring of care plans.

- **Discuss topics for the 2024 Needs Assessment**

- Bagchi proposed that the next topic for their needs assessment should be new infections, emphasizing the need for more outreach to the Latino population. The team agreed on the need to explore these areas further, with Bagchi suggesting a deeper assessment in the next needs assessment.

8. Administrative Issues

- No Administrative issues to report.

9. Announcements

- The committee reviewed and updated the FY 23-24 calendar.

10. Next Meeting

- The next REC meeting will be held on November 20, 2023, at 10AM via Zoom.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:59 AM.