

Public Awareness & Community Engagement (PACE) Committee Meeting Summary

April 16, 2025

Date:	Wednesday, April 16, 2025	Type:	Virtual, Zoom
Start Time:	10:18 a.m.	End Time:	11:36 a.m.
Leaders	Africka Hinds (Stand-In Chair, CHPC Chair), Angel H. Ruiz & Reggie Knox (Incoming Co-Chairs), Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos (CT Department of Public Health Resource Liaison)		
Participants:	12	Next Meeting:	May 21, 2025

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Africka Hinds, a CHPC Committee Chair and the stand-in PACE Committee chair, opened the committee, inviting everyone to introduce themselves with their names, affiliations, and a fun “superpower” as an icebreaker. Members shared everything from telepathy to flying, setting a warm and playful tone for the meeting. Ms. Hinds reviewed the meeting etiquette:

• Allowing one person to speak at a time	• One person speaks at a time
• Share the floor – treat all with respect	• Ask questions if any terms or acronyms are unclear
• Use ELMO (Everybody, Let’s Move On) if you feel a topic has been thoroughly discussed	• Raise a hand (physically or digitally) to signal you would like to speak

Ms. Hinds expressed excitement for the committee’s growth, then introduced Angel H. Ruiz and Reggie Knox as PACE’s new co-chairs, noting that this meeting would be their first in these roles and emphasizing the support available from Cross Sector Consulting, CHPC leadership, and DPH.

Co-Chair Opening Remarks

Both co-chairs gave an introduction, expressing their vision and hopes for the year ahead:

- **Angel H. Ruiz** spoke about his passion for working with youth and families in the pediatric HIV field, referencing his work at Connecticut Children’s alongside Danielle Warren-Dias. He described his excitement about taking on a co-chair role and his commitment to **making sure every voice is heard** within the committee, especially those most affected by HIV in Connecticut. Mr. Ruiz reflected on the importance of inclusivity, energy, and engagement as the committee moves forward.
- **Reggie Knox** introduced himself as a long-time survivor and advocate, having lived with HIV for nearly 40 years and been a member of CHPC since 2010. He shared how meaningful it was for him to bring his lived experience to the table, stating his hope to **share what he’s learned so others** can avoid the hardships he faced. He expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve as co-chair, his commitment to growing the committee, and his belief in the importance of authentic, diverse representation and robust advocacy for those living with or affected by HIV.

Africka Hinds thanked both co-chairs for their vulnerability, leadership, and willingness to serve as role models as PACE enters a new chapter.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

PACE Committee Charge: Ms. Hinds provided a succinct review of the **PACE Committee charge**, highlighting the committee’s responsibility for recruiting, retaining, mentoring, and orienting members of the Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium, as well as leading public awareness and health communication strategies to support those living with or at risk of HIV in Connecticut.

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Committee Charge & PACE's Role in the Integrated Plan	
<p>The Public Awareness and Community Engagement (PACE) Committee is responsible for recruiting, retaining, mentoring, and orienting members of the Connecticut HIV Prevention Coalition (CHPC). The committee also coordinates marketing initiatives, public awareness campaigns, and health communication strategies. Its primary focus is on developing strategies that support populations living with or at the highest risk of HIV in Connecticut.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 1: Reduce New HIV Infections by 2026 – <i>(awareness campaigns and initiatives)</i> • Goal 2: Achieve and increased viral load suppression rate among PWH who are in care by 2026 and increased viral load suppression rate among people with diagnosed HIV – <i>(awareness campaigns and initiatives)</i> • Goal 3: Reduce HIV-related disparities and health inequities – <i>(broaden membership)</i> • Goal 4: Achieve integrated, coordinated efforts that address the HIV epidemic across community partners – <i>(flexible, timely, and responsive awareness campaigns + broadening membership)</i>

MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

Recruitment Gaps & Strategies:

The group discussed gaps in CHPC membership, particularly among those under age 29 and from Tolland County. Members offered a range of ideas:

- Promoting CHPC at social clubs and hosting food-centered events to attract young adults.
- Connecting with A Place to Nourish Youth Health's (APNH) under 30 empowerment group (via Nick Bosnack and Tim) for target outreach.
- Partnering with Connecticut Children's, Gay and Lesbian Health Collective, and MANA for lunch-and-learn events and direct engagement.
- Sharing CHPC materials at recovery centers like CCAR Windham, as these sites often engage with motivated community members.
- Working with colleges for internships or service placements, and exploring outreach to local high school health classes.
- Using digital flyers, social media and more reliable, youth-friendly messaging

Ms. Hinds emphasized combining traditional in-person recruitment with creative, technology-driven outreach to broaden the committee's impact.

Outreach Toolkit & Recruitment Materials (See Appendix A)

David Reyes presented the "Your Voice Matters" digital postcard, ready for print. The committee supported producing a practical postcard (4x6") with regional resources, QR codes, and key contacts on the back, following best practices from other planning councils. Members also suggested including links to insurance assistance (Connecticut AIDS Drug Assistance Program [CADAP]) and local hashtags for broader reach.

- Members were encouraged to share hashtag or messaging ideas with Mr. Reyes or the co-chairs.

Promotional Video Initiative

- **Concept:** Create short, engaging videos to introduce each committee (Quality Performance Measures [QPM], Public Awareness and Community Engagement [PACE], Needs Assessment Planning [NAP], and Ending the Syndemic [ETS]) and encourage broader participation.
- **Length:**
 - **30 seconds to 1 minute** for social media
 - **4-5 minutes** for websites and stakeholder meetings

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- **Key Questions Covered:**
 - How does this committee help people?
 - Why does this committee need community voices?
 - How do new voices make the committee stronger?
 - What has this committee done that made a difference?
 - How do you attend meetings?
- **Implementation Discussion:** Initial footage will be collected via Zoom, with Angel Ruiz and Reggie Knox as the first featured speakers to encourage wider member / CHPC attendee involvement at the PACE Committee. Each video will highlight the committee's impact, the importance of new voices, and how to get involved with that particular committee.

Newsletter Progress

Mr. Reyes provided a quick update on the committee's upcoming newsletter. He shared that two articles—one on anti-stigmatizing language and another exploring the connections between HIV and other STIs—have been completed. Other pieces are still in progress, including **personal stories led by Reggie Knox and Ken Plourd, and an article on scientific advancements being developed by Dante Gennaro and a subject matter expert from Yale.** The team aims to format the newsletter fully and be ready by May 21.

In addition to these articles, the committee discussed featuring an FAQ section focused on advocacy and local government participation, with helpful resource links so readers can easily get more involved and find support.

Africka Hinds encouraged everyone to submit new ideas or late articles, reminding the group that there's still time to contribute before the final deadline. The aim is to make the newsletter as engaging, relevant, and representative as possible for the whole community.

Committee Promotional Video Initiative Discussion: Ms. Hinds shared that the ongoing initiative to create promotional videos for each CHPC committee had received approval from CHPC leadership. She reminded the group of and led a discussion around the following proposed concept, structure, key questions, and plan for filming for these videos:

- Concept: Short, engaging videos to introduce each committee and encourage participation
- Length:
 - 30 seconds – 1 minute for social media
 - 4-5 minutes for websites and stakeholder meetings
- Key Questions: The committee was invited to react to and select their preferred key question through a poll (poll results are at the end of this meeting summary). The questions selected by the committee were the following:
 - How does this committee help people?
 - Why does the committee need community voices?
 - How do new voices make the committee stronger?
 - What has this committee done that made a difference?
 - And a section on how to attend meetings
- Filming: Due to the shift from in-person to virtual for the April meeting, these videos will be filmed via Zoom. The videos will involve short clips from different committee members collaged together, like the feature video on the CHPC homepage.

CAMPAIGN WORK

Ms. Hinds opened the discussion by inviting members to share thoughts on how PACE could improve its outreach and visibility through social media and partner networks. The conversation focused on leveraging what's already working while also brainstorming new ways to reach broader audiences.

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Kashia Lynch suggested that PACE consider launching its own dedicated social media page. She noted that this could help centralize information, make PACE’s work more visible, and create a hub for members and partners to share campaign materials more easily. **Mr. Reyes agreed to connect with those interested in helping to identify which platforms—like Instagram or Facebook—would be most effective for the committee’s goals.**

The group discussed the upcoming rollout of new recruitment cards. **Once finalized, these cards will be distributed both digitally and in print.** Members agreed that pairing these cards with consistent hashtags, such as **#CHPCWednesday**, would help drive participation and amplify campaign reach. Other creative hashtag ideas were welcomed, and the committee acknowledged the importance of making it easy for people to join in and reshare.

As part of this effort, the committee also agreed to compile and review an inventory of existing social media and outreach toolkits. This inventory will be featured at the May meeting to ensure everyone is aware of available resources and to identify any gaps that could be addressed in future campaigns.

OTHER BUSINESS AND MEETING FEEDBACK

Alternate Voting Member Discussion & Bylaws

Africka Hinds facilitated a discussion centered on strengthening the **CHPC member voice and community representation** in CHPC, specifically by **formalizing alternate voting members** rather than simply maintaining a waiting list. Danielle Warren-Dias shared the Ryan White Planning Council’s model:

- Applicants not initially voted in as full members can become “alternates” who participate in meetings and may vote when a regular member is absent or quorum is not met.
- The alternates system helps maintain active, diverse representation, ensuring people living with HIV (PLWH) have strong, consistent voices at the table.
- The group discussed the importance of **documenting this policy in committee bylaws**, so alternates automatically step in if a full member leaves.

Ms. Hinds acknowledged this as a significant and potentially promising structural change to be raised for action at the next Executive Board meeting.

Youth Focus Subcommittee

The committee discussed the need to improve youth representation within PACE and CHPC. **Danielle Warren-Dias referenced the success of a previous youth advisory group** and suggested that a similar model could be useful again.

Angel Ruiz and Reggie Knox agreed, noting that youth should have direct input and help shape committee activities. The group agreed that having a dedicated space for young people is important for outreach and engagement.

It was decided that **a planning session for the Youth Focus Subcommittee would be scheduled between this and the next full committee meeting.** The purpose of the session will be to set goals, discuss structure, and begin identifying youth participants and supports needed for meaningful involvement.

Africka Hinds confirmed that updates from this planning session would be shared at the next committee meeting.

Meeting Feedback

Before adjourning, Africka Hinds invited members to share their thoughts and reflections on the meeting by completing the **meeting feedback form**. The form was launched at the close of the session to gather input on what worked well, what could be improved, and any suggestions for future topics or committee activities.

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Members were encouraged to use this opportunity to help shape the direction and effectiveness of future PACE meetings.

NEXT STEPS

- Contact APNH and MANA regarding youth and Tolland County recruitment.
- Finalize and print updated “party card” recruitment materials with resources, QR codes, and creative messaging.
- Develop and launch PACE social media initiatives; identify best platforms and posting strategies.
- Record initial committee promotional videos with co-chairs as featured speakers.
- Complete and format newsletter articles, including advocacy FAQ and resource links.
- Schedule and conduct a planning session for the Youth Focus Subcommittee prior to the next meeting.
- Compile an inventory of existing resources and available outreach social media toolkits for review at the May meeting.
- Encourage ongoing feedback, campaign ideas, and active participation in upcoming events.

ATTENDANCE

Africka Hinds, Angel H. Ruiz, Carl Ferris, Charles Hardy, Danielle Warren-Dias, David Reyes, Kashia Lynch, Monique Davis, William Reginald Knox (Reggie Knox), Ruby Rose, Santos Cancel, Steven Thalasis

FEEDBACK

Summary Table from Interactive Meeting Feedback Poll (n=8)				
Questions		Yes	No	Unsure
1	CHPC Member?	63%	37%	*
2	I felt comfortable participating in the meeting	100%	*	*
3	I felt the meeting was well organized and ran smoothly	100%	*	*
4	I liked the best: Always engaging and interactive, Africka make the meeting very welcoming, Honesty, Brainstorming Ideas, Open discussion and option to type in chat if one prefers to chat rather than speak out, the group cohesiveness, the openness of the members			
5	Suggestions for improvement: More members, reduce the amount of information, I think we did good			

APPENDIX A

CONNECTICUT HIV PLANNING CONSORTIUM (CHPC) RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT USE GUIDE

Purpose of the Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to support **DPH-funded sites** in promoting the **Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC)** by incorporating recruitment materials into **physical office spaces and social media outreach**. The goal is to increase community participation and awareness of CHPC's work, ensuring diverse voices help shape HIV/AIDS prevention and care strategies in Connecticut.

About the CHPC

The CHPC conducts **planning work** to help the **Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH)** and its partners make meaningful decisions about the **delivery of HIV/AIDS prevention and care services**. The CHPC also fosters **networking, leadership development, professional growth, and HIV/AIDS awareness**.

As part of its work, the CHPC gathers information on **HIV, STIs, Hepatitis, Substance Use Disorders (SUD), homelessness, and mental health** to develop essential planning documents, such as:



- **Epidemiological Profiles**
- **Statewide HIV/AIDS/Syndemic Needs & Resource Assessment**
- **Statewide HIV/AIDS/Syndemic Prevention & Care Plan**
- **Statewide Coordinated Statement of Need (SCSN)**

How to Use the Toolkit

1. Physical Promotion at DPH-Funded Sites

- Print and display the **postcards (at the end of this document)** in **waiting rooms, lobbies, and offices** where clients and staff will see them.
- Ensure front desk staff and outreach teams are aware of CHPC's mission and can **encourage participation**.
- Consider including **CHPC recruitment tool in intake materials** or community resource packets.

2. Social Media Integration

- Post the **social media graphics (at the end of this document)** to your organization's **Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn**.
- Use **#CHPCWednesday** to synchronize with other DPH-funded sites and create a **coordinated recruitment push**. Posting on the third Wednesday of the month for a coordinated approach.
- Suggested caption templates:
 - **"Your voice matters! Join the CT HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC) and help shape HIV prevention and care in our state. Meetings happen every **third Wednesday of the month**—your perspective is essential! Learn more at CTHIVPlanning.org #CHPCWednesday #HIVPrevention #PublicHealth"**
 - ** It's CHPC Wednesday! **
The **CT HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC)** brings together voices from across Connecticut to shape the

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future of HIV prevention and care. If you're passionate about equity, public health, and making a difference in your community, CHPC needs you! 💡

Join us every **third Wednesday of the month** and be part of the conversation. Your voice matters!

📣 **Learn more & get involved today!**

#CHPCWednesday #HIVPrevention #PublicHealth #CommunityVoices #EndHIV #CTHealth #HIVEquity

○ **🌍 Stronger Together! 🌍**

HIV prevention and care impact all of us. That's why the **CT HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC)** is calling on **you**—community members, advocates, and providers—to help shape Connecticut's response.

📅 **We meet every third Wednesday of the month.** Join us to share your experiences, learn from others, and make an impact.

👤 **Your voice can create change. Will you be part of it?**

#CHPCWednesday #TogetherWeCan #EndHIV #CTCommunity #HIVAwareness #PublicHealthMatters

○ **💬 Let's Talk About It! 💬**

Want to be part of a community shaping real change in **HIV prevention and care**? The **CT HIV Planning Consortium (CHPC)** is where your voice matters.

🗣️ **We need diverse perspectives, bold ideas, and passionate advocates.** Join us on **CHPC Wednesday (every third Wednesday of the month)** to help shape Connecticut's HIV strategy.

💡 Ready to step up? **Get involved today!**

#CHPCWednesday #HIVAction #JoinTheConversation #PublicHealth #HIVPrevention #CTHealth

3. Dissemination & Availability

- The materials will be available for **download on the PPCT and CHPC websites.**
- Consider integrating CHPC promotion into **newsletters, email updates, and community announcements.**

Contact Information

For questions, additional materials, or more information, visit CTHIVPlanning.org or contact **CT DPH/CHPC representatives.**

Thank you for helping to strengthen CHPC's reach and impact!

Social Media Post



YOUR VOICE MATTERS:
JOIN THE CONNECTICUT HIV PLANNING CONSORTIUM (CHPC)

The CHPC meets on the third Wednesday of most months, gathering individuals from across our state to provide an opportunity for people to:

- Influence HIV Care and Prevention in Connecticut
- Be part of a diverse, supportive community
- Make a difference for those affected by HIV

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHPC VISIT CTHIVPLANNING.ORG, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW, OR VISIT THE LINK IN THE CAPTION





Print Post Card Front



YOUR VOICE MATTERS:
JOIN THE CONNECTICUT HIV PLANNING CONSORTIUM (CHPC)






Print Post Card Back

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