

## Public Awareness & Community Engagement (PACE) Committee Meeting Summary

September 17, 2025

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday, Septemeber 17, 2025	<b>Type:</b>	In-Person, Chrysalis Center
<b>Start Time:</b>	1:00 p.m.	<b>End Time:</b>	2:30 p.m.
<b>Leaders</b>	Angel H. Ruiz & Reggie Knox (Incoming Co-Chairs), Africka Hinds (Supporting Chair, CHPC Chair), Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos (CT Department of Public Health Resource Liaison)		
<b>Participants:</b>	19	<b>Next Meeting:</b>	November 19, 2025 (In-Person)

### MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Launch Summer Newsletter in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole
- Finalize distribution strategy for Summer Newsletter
- Kickoff planning for Fall/Winter Newsletter
- Demonstrate Social Media Resource Folder
- Advnace Youth Subcommittee development

### ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

**Angel H. Ruiz** provided a brief overview of the PACE's charge, including recruiting, retaining, mentoring, and orienting new members, and leading market initiatives to reach diverse populations, aligning closely with the Integrated Plan's goals of reducing HIV infections, achieving viral load suppression, and reducing disparities.

Committee Charge & PACE's Role in the Integrated Plan	
<p><b>The Public Awareness and Community Engagement (PACE) Committee</b> 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"> <li>• <b>Goal 1:</b> Reduce New HIV Infections by 2026 – <i>(awareness campaigns and initiatives)</i></li> <li>• <b>Goal 2:</b> 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></li> <li>• <b>Goal 3:</b> Reduce HIV-related disparities and health inequities – <i>(broaden membership)</i></li> <li>• <b>Goal 4:</b> Achieve integrated, coordinated efforts that address the HIV epidemic across community partners – <i>(flexible, timely, and responsive awareness campaigns + broadening membership)</i></li> </ul>

- **July Meeting Summary:** Motion to approve was made, seconded, and approved with no abstentions
- **CT Distribution Center Update:** Travis Gibbs provided an important update that the CT Distribution Center will close on December 31, 2025. DPH will take over the distribution of materials for its funded sites through an order form similar to SSP supplies. Until December 31<sup>st</sup>, ordering operates as usual. Organizations were encouraged to contact Travis ([tgibbs@act-ct.org](mailto:tgibbs@act-ct.org)) to pick up remaining printed/physical materials and PPR supplies (gowns, masks) before closure.

### SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER – LAUNCH

The committee celebrated the completion of the Summer 2025 Newsletter, now available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Members provided enthusiastic feedback on the content, particularly highlighting:

- Reggie Knox's Feature
- The Word Search Activity
- The Design

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### Distribution Strategy Finalized:

- Post on CHPC website (to track web traffic/clicks)
- Distribute via CHPC listserv and CT Sexual Health Coalition listserv
- Encourage members to share through their agency listservs
- Limited print copies available upon request (noted on sign-in sheets)
- Additional Distribution Channels Identified:
  - Recovery houses (via bulletin boards) - Chris volunteered to coordinate
  - Detox centers and substance use treatment facilities
  - AA/NA meetings and support groups
  - Agency waiting rooms
  - Clinic bulletin boards
  - Community centers and libraries

### Innovative Ideas Raised:

- Create QR code placards for waiting rooms instead of full printed newsletters
- Develop an interactive digital version with clickable links
- Add audio narration feature for accessibility (members volunteering to narrate articles)
- Explore video components for future editions
- Consider flipbook-style digital format

### **FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER PLANNING**

Prioritizing Activity Results - Using dot voting, committee members identified top priority topics for the Fall/Winter 2025 edition.

#### Top Voted Topics

1. Community Stories / Storytelling
2. Wellness and Joy
3. Living with HIV (personal perspectives and experiences)
4. HIV and Other Health Issues (co-occurring conditions)
5. What Matters / Myths vs Facts
6. Community Support Groups

#### Content Contributors Identified:

- **Monique Davis:** Will write about PrEP from a straight woman's perspective, addressing the misconception that PrEP is only for gay men and discussing dating/relationship safety for women.
- **Danielle Warren Dias & Angel Ruiz:** Will collaborate on a story about recovery, mutual support, and wellness while living with HIV.
- **Chrissy Marie:** Expressed willingness to share a spotlight on her recovery story and experience.
- **Multiple Members:** Volunteered for Myths vs Facts content, addressing persistent misconceptions like "HIV is over," "you can't have children," or "you can tell by looking at someone."

#### Key Themes Identified:

- Need for content representing straight men and women using PrEP
- Importance of showcasing diverse perspectives beyond LGBTQ+ community
- Value of long-term survivor stories and intergenerational wisdom

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- Desire for practical, accessible information that speaks to varied audiences

### Feedback on Newsletter Accessibility:

A newer member provided valuable "fresh eyes" perspective, noting that the current newsletter may feel more geared toward HIV service providers than community members. Suggestions included:

- Clearer headers and calls-to-action for general audiences
- More prominent information on how to access testing/services
- Balance between professional content and community-friendly messaging

**Deadline Set: October 15, 2025 for first drafts.** Staff will provide simple templates (1-2 paragraph format) and offer interview/editorial support.

### SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCE FOLDER (See Link)

David Reyes provided a comprehensive demonstration of the Social Media Resource Folder, a digital repository designed to centralize HIV prevention and health promotion materials from across Connecticut.

#### **Purpose & Benefits:**

- Centralized library of tested, approved outreach materials
- Saves time by eliminating need to create content from scratch
- Organized by topic (PrEP, HIV Testing, Youth, Mental Health, etc.)
- Allows agencies to share successful campaigns statewide
- Materials can be downloaded immediately for use

#### **How to Use:**

1. Visit the folder via provided link or QR code
2. Browse topic folders (PrEP, Youth Engagement, Testing, etc.)
3. Download graphics, one-pagers, social media captions
4. Use as-is or adapt for local context
5. Submit your own successful materials via Google Form

#### **Submission Process:**

The committee reviewed the submission form, which includes:

- Contact information (can use pseudonym for privacy)
- Organization/affiliation
- Material type (social media graphic, video, flyer, poster, etc.)
- File upload (up to 1GB; larger files can be emailed directly)
- Topic area selection
- Brief description of intended use
- Optional attribution preference

#### **Review Process Clarified:**

- PACE members will review submissions for appropriateness
- Review typically completed within 2 weeks
- Submitters will be notified of acceptance
- If edits needed, staff will work with submitter collaboratively

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### Suggestions for Enhancement:

- Create a Facebook group version for more dynamic sharing
- Consider integration with existing professional networks
- Ensure email notifications for new uploads
- Provide feedback to submitters (acceptance/edits needed)

### YOUTH SUBCOMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT

The committee made significant progress on establishing a Youth Subcommittee (ages 17-24) to ensure younger voices shape CHPC's work.

#### Purpose Confirmed:

- Create space for young people to shape HIV prevention messaging
- Build youth leadership pathways within HIV planning
- Bridge CHPC with communities young people are part of
- Ensure campaigns use language and platforms that resonate with youth

#### Youth Responsibilities:

- Review CHPC materials and suggest accessible language
- Provide input on outreach methods and social media platforms
- Share short updates at PACE/CHPC meetings
- Lead or co-lead projects (Q&A videos, youth-designed campaigns, TikTok content)

#### Recruitment Strategies & Stakeholders:

- **Positively Speaking Program** - existing youth HIV education program
- **School-based GSA/LGBT groups** - particularly in high schools
- **Allied health programs** at high schools
- **Dr. Ingram's youth advisory group at CHS** (mentioned as potential partnership)
- **ARDC (Addiction Recovery & Development Collaborative)\*\*** member agencies
- **Youth-serving organizations** throughout the state
- **Faith-based youth groups**
- **Community colleges**

#### Recruitment Incentives Identified:

- Frame as resume-building opportunity
- Count as volunteer hours for high school requirements
- Offer as internship credit where applicable
- Provide mentorship from long-term survivors
- Create leadership development pathway

#### Site Champions Needed:

The committee called for 2-3 adult "site champions" to lead initial outreach. Several members expressed interest in making connections with youth-serving programs they're affiliated with.

#### Next Steps:

- Staff will develop recruitment letter and flyer

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- Champions will receive "starter kit" with outreach materials
- Mid-October check-in planned before next PACE meeting
- Goal to have 1-2 youth advisors attend October/November PACE meeting

### Historical Context:

Reggie Knox and others shared that PACE previously had an active youth component that met separately (Saturdays, with transportation provided) and produced powerful campaigns, including PSAs and radio spots. The goal is to revitalize that model adapted for current platforms like TikTok and Instagram.

### NEXT STEPS & KEY DATES

- **End of Week (Sept 20):** Summer Newsletter posted on website and distributed via listserv
- **Early October:** Social Media Resource Folder links sent in follow-up email
- **Mid-October:** Youth Subcommittee champions planning check-in
- **October 15, 2025:** Fall/Winter Newsletter content drafts due
- **Next PACE Meeting:** October 2025 (date TBD) - Goal to have youth advisors present

### ATTENDANCE

Africka Hinds, Angel Ruiz, Blaise Gilchrist, Carl Ferris, Charles Hardy, Chloe Johnson, Chrissy Ely, Clifford Batson, Danielle Warren-Dias, David Reyes, Eric Hellmann, Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos, Jordan Wynn, Lauren Beaudry, Michael Judd, Monique Davis, Reggie Knox, Ruby Rios, Tom Alfano (he/him), Travis Gibbs

### ACTION ITEMS

- Upload final Summer Newsletter (all 3 languages) to CHPC website by end of week
- Distribute Summer Newsletter via CHPC listserv
- Send follow-up email with:
  - Social Media Resource Folder link and QR code
  - Submission form link
  - Fall/Winter Newsletter templates
  - October 15 deadline reminder
- Develop Youth Subcommittee recruitment materials (letter, flyer, interest form)
- Distribute "starter kit" to site champions for youth outreach
- Schedule mid-October check-in with youth subcommittee champions
- Send reminder emails to Fall/Winter Newsletter content contributors (2 weeks before deadline)
- Review and update Social Media Resource Folder submission form based on feedback (add email notification option)