Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium

Public Awareness & Community Engagement (PACE) Committee Meeting Summary

November 19, 2025

Date:	Wednesday, January 21, 2026	**Type:**	Virtual (Zoom)
Start Time:	12:30 p.m.	**End Time:**	1:30 p.m.
Leaders	Angel H. Ruiz & Reggie Knox (Co-Chairs), Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos (CT Department of Public Health Resource Liaison)		
Participants:	19	**Next Meeting:**	February 18, 2026 (Virtual)

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Administrative and leadership updates
- February Newsletter review and finalization
- Social Media Resource Folder presentation and walkthrough
- Youth Subcommittee development strategy
- Share announcements and complete feedback

WELCOME & MINDFUL MINUTE

The meeting opened with introductions where participants shared their names, organizations, and something they were looking forward to in 2026. Highlights include:

- **Chrissy Marie Ely** (DPH/Community Member): Staying clean and staying single
- **Carl Ferris** (Community Member, New Haven): Present and engaged
- **Clifford Batson** (Community Member, Hartford): Greater endurance for PACE committee work
- **Charles Hardy** (Community Member, Middletown): Hoping for peace in the world
- **Tom Alfano** (ACT, Project TLC): Becoming better at his job as a transitional case manager
- **Ruby Rios** (ACT, Project TLC): Her daughter's drawing was selected for a children's book cover
- **David Reyes** (Cross Sector Consulting, Support Staff): Moving out and becoming independent
- **Jordan Wynn** (Ryan White Planning Council): Looking forward to the summer after skin loss surgery and gym progress
- **Travis Gibbs** (ACT, Prevention Department): Taking it one day at a time
- **Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos** (CT DPH Liaison): Visiting Peru with her daughter after six or seven years
- **Danielle Warren-Dias** (UConn Children's): Moving to a high-rise condo and experiencing city living
- **Lauren Beaudry** (HRA New Britain): Finding her own place and taking a full week vacation outside of Connecticut

Following introductions, the group participated in a mindful minute to center themselves before beginning the agenda.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

November Meeting Summary Approval

The November 2025 meeting summary was presented for approval. **Motion to approve** was made by Carl Ferris and seconded. The summary was **approved with no abstentions.**

Committee Charge Overview

Angel Ruiz provided a brief overview of the PACE Committee charge for newer members. The PACE Committee is responsible for recruiting and retaining members of the CHPC, coordinating outreach campaigns, making initiatives, and developing health communication strategies directly to support individuals impacted by HIV in Connecticut.

Connection to HIV Integrated Plan Development

Jenny reminded the group that CHC is in the middle of developing the **2027-2031 Connecticut Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Plan.** Much of PACE's work this year, including the newsletter, supports this process by facilitating community input and showing what the Plan means in real people's lives.

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FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER REVIEW & FINALIZATION

Overview

The committee reviewed the interactive HTML newsletter, now titled the **February 2026 Newsletter** to reflect a more realistic distribution timeline. Angel emphasized that while the Executive Team wanted to focus on the Integrated Plan, the committee insisted on keeping the community voice at the forefront. The newsletter successfully merges both priorities.

Newsletter Content Structure:

1. **Leadership Transition**
    a. Honoring outgoing CHPC Chair Nilda and welcoming incoming Chair Blaise Gilchrist
    b. Photos needed from Blaise for publication
2. **Integrated Plan Overview**
    a. Brief, accessible explanation of the four interconnected pillars
    b. "Why It Matters" section explaining relevance to community members
    c. **Feedback:**
        i. Chrissy suggested naming the four pillars immediately in the overview paragraph for clarity
3. **Community Stories Aligned with Pillars**
    a. **Diagnose Pillar:** Mike Judd's story on the importance of diagnosis
    b. **Treat Pillar:** Danielle Warren-Dias on recovery, wellness, and staying in care
    c. **Respond Pillar:** Chrissy Marie Ely's story on comprehensive care and recovery
    d. **Feedback/Notes:**
        i. Interactive toggle feature allows readers to switch between stories
        ii. Pull quotes highlighted throughout for visual appeal
4. **World AIDS Day Feature**
    a. Extended feature on Clifford Batson's remarks at Dunkin' Donuts Park event
    b. **Action Item:** Clifford consented to photos being used and potentially re-recording his remarks for audio feature
    c. Jordan Wynn also consented to photos being used
    d. Cliffored shared: "This was my first time I ever spoke out like that… it made me feel real glad to be able to do that."
5. **HIV Workforce Insights Section**
    a. Data from workforce needs assessment included to inform consumers about the HIV workforce
    b. **Significant discussion on accessibility:** Members noted that the section title "Connecticut HIV Workforce Insights" feels provider-focused
6. **2026 Meeting Schedule**
    a. Request to add Zoom links to calendar entries or direct links to registration

Key Feedback & Discussion

Balancing Community and Provider Content

Chrissy provided valuable feedback on the newsletter's balance:

- "I'm attracted to it for the beginning as a consumer, and then I'm getting bored because it doesn't seem like it's for me anymore when I get to the "workforce insights" section… it gets tricky because you kind of want it for both."

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- Suggested retitling the workforce section to be more inclusive (e.g., "Who's Taking Care of Us?" or including the word "provider" to frame it as offering insights to consumers)
- Recommended changing "Community Voices" to "Our Community Voices" or "Your Community Voices" to make it feel more inclusive for all readers

Technical Design Feedback

- Members appreciated the interactive elements (hover effects, clickable links, toggle between stories)
- Chrissy: "I like how the boxes light up yellow when you scroll over. I think that's a very nice feature."
- Chrissy also noted: "I love that it flows on a one-pager and all I'm doing is scrolling… you don't always find that anymore."
- **Suggestions for workforce data section (to simplify it):**
    - Catherine Canales suggested dropdown/expandable sections so readers can click for more detail without being immediately overwhelmed; Danielle Warren-Dias suggested "expand if you want to read more" approach

Event Promotion Gap

Chrissy raised an important point about event awareness:

- "I work for Department of Public Health. How come I didn't even know that this happened at Dunkin' Donut Park?"
- Suggested reaching out to DPH Workforce Development for signage and broader promotion
- Noted that the event wasn't promoted in the recovery community (12-step fellowships)

SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCE FOLDER PRESENTATION

Overview

Jenny and David walked through the Social Media Resource Folder, explaining its purpose: instead of every organization reinventing their own materials, agencies can share what they've developed. Materials can be downloaded, rebranded with local agency information (address, contact info, hours), and redistributed.

Folder Contents Demonstrated

- **Unbranded DPH materials** from the Positive Prevention website that can be customized
- **Test CT campaign videos** that can be revitalized and shared
- **Stamford CARES example materials** showing how agencies can brand materials with their own contact information, logo, and hours

Submission Form Review

The submission form was reviewed with the committee. Key feedback included:

- **Organization field:** Add option for individuals not affiliated with an agency ("Individual/Organiation/Affiliation" or allow "N/A")
- **Acronym Accessibility:** Chrissy noted that acronyms like "PrEP," "PEP," "STI," and "U=U" may not be understood by all community members
- **Language Simplification:** Replace "attribution" with "credit to my organization"
- **Consent questions:** Committee discussed whether additional consent language is needed for people appearing in submitted photos/videos, particularly for minors and people at private events

Angels Key Point: *"This is homegrown from Connecticut… it's something that will help agencies brand it yourself with your logo and contact information. It provides a broader message across the state."*

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NEW MEMBER ONBOARDING DISCUSSION

A significant discussion emerged about supporting new members:

- **Chrissy:** "As a new member, I feel lost a lot. I just follow along and take notes… I can only imagine someone else who may not have the background."
- **Travis Gibbs:** "It's a steep learning curve being new to this work… all the acronyms and the terminology and the funding… a new orientation meeting periodically would be really beneficial."

Proposed Solutions:

- Quarterly (tri-annual) orientation meetings for new members
- Optional Q&A sessions separate from regular business meetings
- Could serve as a recruitment tool – inviting potential members to orientation before the full CHPC meeting

STORY RECRUITMENT IDEA

Danielle Warren-Dias suggested adding a call-to-action in the newsletter for community members to share their own stories:

- "Can we add, 'if you want to tell your story, is there something you would like to speak to?" Because if not, it can tend to be the same people."

Chrissy shared context: She recounted a conversation with Miriam at DMHAS, who was moved to tears at a Narcotics Anonymous convention, realizing many people in recovery succeed, but providers rarely hear back from them. "Could you send some people to talk to clinicians because sometimes we don't see people again… they're getting burnt out. They feel like they're not helping. But this is proof and evidence that people do actually do better."

YOUTH SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Due to time constraints, the Youth Subcommittee was not discussed in depth. Angel noted this will be a priority item for the next meeting. Key points mentioned:

- Blaise Gilchrist and Jordan Wynn have been identified as potential youth leaders
- Will be at the forefront of the next PACE meeting agenda

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPDATES

Planning Council Listserv

- Monthly CHEZ HIV testing events at the gay club in Hartford (first Friday of every month)
- ACT events and other community activities
- World AIDS Day events and similar gatherings

Jordan asked members to share their email addresses in the chat to be added to the listserv

ATTENDANCE

Angel Ruiz, Blaise Gilchrist, Carl Ferris, Catherine Canelas, Charles Hardy, Chloe Johnson, Chrissy Marie Ely, Clifford Batson, Danielle Warren-Dias, David Reyes, Fernanda Hernandez, Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos, Jordan Wynn, Lauren Beaudry, Ruby Rios, Ruth Pennacchia, Sandra Perez-Ruiz, Tom Alfano, Travis Gibbs

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ACTION ITEMS

David Reyes:

- Implement newsletter edits (pillar names in overview, workforce section title, "regularly updated" language)
- Add hover/expandable sections for workforce data
- Update submission form language for clarity and accessibility
- Explore adding audio recording of Clifford's remarks
- Add Zoom links or registration to meeting schedule

Blaise Gilchrist: Send photo for newsletter leadership transition section

Clifford Batson: Consider re-recording World AIDS Day remarks for audio feature (optional)

Angel & Jenny: Prioritize Youth Subcommittee discussion for next PACE meeting

All Members:

- Share email addresses with Jordan Wynn to the Hartford Planning Council listserv
- Share newsletter through agency networks once published

ACTION ITEMS

- **Immediate Actions**
  - Finalize newsletter edits based on committee feedback
  - Obtain photos from Blaise Gilchrist and Nilda Fernandez for leadership transition section
  - Potentially record Clifford's World AIDS Day remarks for audio feature
  - Update submission form language for accessibility
- **February 2026**
  - Newsletter publication and distribution
- **Next PACE Meeting**
  - Youth Subcommittee will be at the forefront of the agenda
  - Continue new 60-minute meeting format
- **Ongoing**
  - Social Media Resource Folder promotion and submissions
  - Youth subcommittee recruitment
  - Consider development of new member onboarding/orientation program

MEETING FEEDBACK

Summary Table from Interactive Meeting Feedback Poll (n=11)

	Questions	Yes (A)	No (B)	Unsure (C)	(D)	F
1	CHPC Member?	36%	64%	*	*	*
2	I would give this committee meeting a grade of…	91%	9%	*	*	*
3	I understood the meeting information and materials	100%	*	*	*	*
4	The meeting felt inclusive and respectful of all voices	100%	*	*	*	*
5	One thing I liked about the meeting was: Very informative, I did not know much about the newsletter beforehand; Group discussion about the newsletter; The outline of the newspaper; The feedback shared; Open-minded; Always active group; newsletter;					

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	inclusive, productive; The newsletter, I enjoyed reading the pillars; Lots of great feedback -- receptive listeners!
6	One word to describe your committee experience: None; More time. At least 1.5 hr; None really; None!; N/A; N/A; No suggestions. Love everyone

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