

Public Awareness & Community Engagement (PACE) Committee Meeting Summary

February 18, 2026

Date:	Wednesday, February 18, 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:	14	Next Meeting:	March 18, 2026 (In-Person)

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Present final February newsletter and walkthrough all three versions
- Report back on Youth Subcommittee development meeting
- Review 2026 PACE Work Plan
- Begin planning for June newsletter
- Complete meeting feedback and share announcements

WELCOME & MINDFUL MINUTE

The meeting opened with introductions where participants shared their names, organizations, and how they were feeling. Several members shared personal updates reflecting a mix of highs and lows:

- **Jordan Wynn** (CHPC Member / Ryan White Planning Council): Feeling “very in my head” on a cloudy, rainy day
- **Chrissy Marie Ely** (DPH/Community Member): Recently returned from Miami; balancing work at DPH with caregiving for her father
- **Ruby Rios** (ACT, Program Manager): Busy week at work and at home with her seven-year-old daughter
- **Carl Ferris** (Community Member, New Haven): Had a good week; his group held a Valentine’s Day fundraising celebration focused on “togetherness, love, and kindness”
- **Tom Alfano** (ACT, Project TLC): Feeling off due to the President’s Day holiday throwing off his schedule
- **Danielle Warren-Dias** (UConn Children’s): Cycling between feeling frustrated and thankful
- **Chloe Johnson** (Yale Center for Infectious Disease): Busy and a little overwhelmed
- **Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos** (CT DPH Liaison): Bouncing between happy and sad, but productive in processing feelings; reflecting on the Chinese New Year and gratitude for community
- **Clifford Batson** (Community Member, Hartford): Recently experienced a major flood requiring relocation to a new apartment after two new main water pipes burst – “through the grace of God, I’m still here.”
- **David Reyes** (Cross Sector Consulting, Support Staff): Mirroring everyone’s sentiment of highs and lows, hoping for more positivity

Charles Hardy and Jamari Thompson were also present. Following introductions, Angel led the group in a mindful minute to center themselves before beginning the agenda.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

January Meeting Summary Approval

Jenny reminded members that meeting summaries are available on the CHPC website and asked if anyone had reviewed the January meeting summary. A **motion to approve** was made by Chrissy Marie Ely and **seconded** by Jordan Wynn. The summary was **approved**.

Committee Charge Overview

Angel provided a brief overview for newer members: The PACE Committee is responsible for recruiting and retaining members of the CHPC, coordinating outreach campaigns and marketing initiatives, and health communication strategies that directly support people affected by HIV in Connecticut.

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FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER: FINAL PRESENTATION

Overview

Angel emphasized that this was a presentation of the final product, not an editing session. All feedback from the January meeting had been incorporated. The newsletter is now ready for translation and distribution.

Newsletter Walkthrough:

David screen-shared the interactive newsletter and walked through each section:

- **CHPC Meeting Photo:** Opening image showing what a CHPC meeting looks like
- **Leadership Transition:** Honoring outgoing CHPC Chair Nilda Fernandez and welcoming incoming Chair Blaise Gilchrist, with photos of both
- **Integrated Plan Overview:** Per Chrissy's January feedback, the four pillars (Prevent, Treat, Respond, Diagnose) are now named at the top. Includes interactive elements and "Why It Matters" sections in accessible language
- **Community Stories:** Features stories from Danielle Warren-Dias, Chrissy Marie Ely, and Mike Judd, with pull-out quotes and photos. Includes the motorcycle photo of Angel and Danielle ("Betty White and Negrita, nicotine-free"). A "Share Your Story" call-to-action was added, which prompts an email when clicked
- **World AIDS Day Feature:** Extended feature on Clifford Batson's remarks, with embedded audio recording
- **Ryan White Client Insights Section:** Expandable sections incorporated per Catherine's January feedback, with high-level data visible and "learn more" options for deeper detail
- **CHPC Resource Folder:** Advertisement with link to access and submit resources
- **Meeting Schedule:** Links directly to the CHPC calendar rather than individual Zoom links, allowing readers to see meeting dates and add events to their calendars

World AIDS Day Audio Feature

David played a snippet of Clifford's recorded remarks. The recording received enthusiastic responses:

- **Chrissy:** "Oh my God, that's like a motivational speaker... especially with Jesse leaving us, what a wonderful kind of – just gave me goosebumps."
- **Jordan:** "I loved it. I'd play it right away. Oh my God. Look at you, Clifford."
- **Chrissy on design:** "I like the red and the white... I'm an artist. So I'm like, really, I could tear this apart and I can't because it's so good. I love the yellow. I love the red, the blue. It's awesome."

Three Newsletter Versions

David explained the three versions created:

1. **Interactive Desktop Version:** Full experience with hover effects, expandable sections, and embedded audio
2. **Mobile-Optimized Version:** Single-column layout with all sections expanded by default (no JavaScript/hover functionality for touchscreens)
3. **Print-Ready Version:** Approximately seven pages formatted like a magazine for printing and physical distribution

Translation Update

Both Spanish and Haitian Creole translations have been completed by translator Claire Nichols (MC2-WIT). Claire delivered ahead of schedule, even though the deadline was Friday (February 20th), and the translations arrived early. The translated content will be inserted into all three newsletter formats, with an English version target of Monday for website upload.

Distribution Update

Angel asked members how they plan to share the newsletter. Ideas included:

- **Clifford:** Sharing on websites and sending to facilities with waiting room televisions

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- **Chrissy:** Has an email blast of all recovery houses in Connecticut – will send so they can print hard copies for bulletin boards
- **Planning Council Listserv:** Confirmed as a distribution channel
- **QR Code:** Will be embedded into the print version to link to the interactive version

Clifford's reaction: "It's just like walking on the red carpet for the Grammys."

YOUTH SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE

Report from February 17 Meeting

Angel introduced the Youth Subcommittee update, emphasizing that the committee wants Jordan and Blaise to have genuine ownership – “not give them tasks, but for them to really take hold of it and run with it.”

Blaise Gilchrist provided a comprehensive debrief:

- **Current Status:** Two recruits have been identified
- **Planned Activities:** Youth involvement in newsletters (potentially a youth-specific section), contributing to the Social Media Resource Folder, developing or identifying media content
- **Recruitment Messaging:** Emphasizing opportunities to make a difference, have stakeholderhood, play a role in ending the HIV epidemic, build community, and bridge generational gaps
- **Key Campaign Messages:**
 - HIV and PrEP are not just for gay men – current advertisements often target MSM or trans women, potentially excluding other community members
 - Messaging should be framed as education, not fear
 - HIV is not “a disease or yesteryear” – bringing messaging into the modern day to engage youth
- **Meeting Schedule:** Tentative first meeting March 19 or March 23, on a Tuesday or Thursday evening (best for youth with school schedules)

Jordan affirmed Blaise's summary: “You were doing a great job... You explained it and really summed it up.”

How Committee Members Can Help

Members outlined ways PACE members can support the subcommittee:

- Consider cohorts by location (e.g., a “crew in New Haven and a crew in Hartford”)
- Tap into school health classes – the program already teaches high school students as part of their physical education curriculum
- Community services hours as an incentive
- Transportation is critical – asked about funding resources

Blaise's Reflection on Youth Engagement

Blaise shared what kept him engaged as a youth participant in past programs:

- **Sense of Community:** “We kept coming back because there was like a sense of community... we were kind of like a little family already.”
- **Accountability:** “We kind of held each other accountable, made sure we were going that week.”
- **Fun and relationships:** “We had a good time... we ate and laughed, and between the laughs, we were productive, and we got to be creative.”
- **Ownership:** “Having the reins in our hands, or at least feeling that way, kind of helped contribute to us feeling like we were accomplishing something.”
- **Transportation and Bonding:** Vehicles picked up youth from different locations – Blaise recalled being picked up from his SATs in an Escalade. Danielle noted that “a lot of that bonding happens when they're in the ride together... we heard more from them in the car chilling with some music than sitting in an office.”

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Jordan on youth voices: "The youth voices are missing in every single system in this country. Every single place."

2026 PACE WORK PLAN

Due to time constraints, the work plan review was abbreviated. Angel emphasized that all PACE activities must connect to the Integrated Plan.

Key Activities Discussed:

- **Key Activity 1 (General Communications Management):** Monthly meetings, coordination with the executive committee, meeting summaries, and end-of-year reflection with planning for 2027
- **Key Activity 2 (Newsletter Production):** Target of three issues in 2026 – February (completed), June (summer), and Fall/Winter. Angel asked if this was realistic and doable; the committee agreed.

Key Activities 3-6 (statewide campaigns, community engagement, youth subcommittee, and Integrated Plan support) were deferred to the March meeting.

FEEDBACK: STORY FORMAT FOR FUTURE NEWSLETTERS

An important discussion emerged about how contributor stories should relate to the Integrated Plan pillars.

Danielle's feedback:

- Felt frustrated that her initial submission was asked to align with a pillar: "That's like when you write, you're doing it from your own creativity. So I did it, but I really didn't want to."
- Suggested that requirements should be stated upfront so contributors aren't writing freely and then asked to revise
- Noted that the added pillar-focused opening sentence could make the story feel less authentic: "I would read that sentence and say, oh no, it's fine. Here we go again."

Chrissy's perspective:

- Questioned whether every story needs explicit pillar framing: "Isn't the whole experience of the newsletter always gonna fall into one of the pillars without it always having to sound like, okay, now we're gonna fill in that pillar?"
- Emphasized authenticity: "What's shared from the heart reaches the heart... The more informal I am, the more they're attracted, the more calls I get. There are no TED Talks on attraction. They just want to hear the real deal, Holyfield."

Resolution:

- Angel affirmed that the newsletter should speak to "regular people, regular folks" – not providers or funders
- David proposed that the committee can write an introductory paragraph connecting stories to pillars, rather than asking contributors to modify their voice
- Angel agreed: "The pillar has got to fit us... It's not about talking about pillars and people not connecting."

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

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ATTENDANCE

Angel Ruiz, Blaise Gilchrist, Carl Ferris, Charles Hardy, Chrissy Marie Ely, Chloe Johnson, Clifford Batson, Danielle Warren-Dias, David Reyes, Jamari Thompson, Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos, Jordan Wynn, Ruby Rios, Tom Alfano

ACTION ITEMS

- David Reyes:**
 - Insert translated content (Spanish and Haitian Creole) into all three newsletter formats
 - Upload English newsletter to CHPC website (target: Monday)
 - Finalize print-ready version with proper page formatting
 - Create and insert QR code linking interactive newsletter to print version
 - Prepare remaining work plan activities (3-6) for March meeting discussion
- Jordan Wynn & Blaise Gilchrist:**
 - Confirm the first youth subcommittee meeting date
 - Connect with two identified recruits
- All Members:**
 - Identify potential youth subcommittee recruits (ages 17-24)
 - Complete meeting feedback poll
 - Share newsletter once published

MEETING FEEDBACK

Summary Table from Interactive Meeting Feedback Poll (n=7)						
Questions		Yes (A)	No (B)	Unsure (C)	(D)	F
1	CHPC Member?	29%	71%	*	*	*
2	I would give this committee meeting a grade of...	86%	14%	*	*	*
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: Comraderie, inte, A lot of feedback to improve, input from everybody					
6	One word to describe your committee experience: always need more time, We need more time, extend the meeting time- we seem to run over a lot of times					