

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

March 18, 2026

<b>Date:</b>	Wednesday, March 18, 2026	<b>Type:</b>	In-Person (Chryslais)
<b>Start Time:</b>	12:30 p.m.	<b>End Time:</b>	1:30 p.m.
<b>Leaders</b>	Angel H. Ruiz & Reggie Knox (Co-Chairs), Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos (CT Department of Public Health Resource Liaison)		
<b>Participants:</b>	12	<b>Next Meeting:</b>	April 15, 2026 (In-Person)

### MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Administrative updates and February meeting summary approval
- 2026 PACE Work Plan: Comprehensive review of Key Activities 1-6
- Newsletter content brainstorm, distribution strategy, and contributor recruitment
- Campaign development grounded in 2025 Ryan White Needs Assessment findings
- Youth Subcommittee update and recruitment planning
- Announcements, community updates, and meeting feedback

### WELCOME & MINDFUL MINUTE

The meeting opened in the Gallery at the Chrysalis Center in Hartford. **Angel Ruiz** (co-chair) welcomed attendees and invited each person to share their name, organization, and what they were looking forward to.

- **Chrissy Marie Ely** (DPH/Community Member)
- **Carl Ferris** (Community Member, New Haven)
- **Clifford Batson** (Community Member, Hartford)
- **Charles Hardy** (Community Member, Middletown)
- **David Reyes** (Cross Sector Consulting, Support Staff)
- **Jordan Wynn** (Ryan White Planning Council)
- **Chloe Johnson** (Yale HIV and Aging Project)
- **Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos** (CT DPH Liaison)
- **Lauren Beaudry** (HRA New Britain)
- **Reggie Knox** (Community Member, Groton; PACE Committee Co-Chair)
- **Blaise Gilchrist** (UCHC)

### ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

#### February Meeting Summary Approval

Jenny noted the February meeting summary had been emailed the previous week and asked if anyone had reviewed it. Attendees confirmed they had, with no corrections or additions. A motion to approve was carried with all in favor and none opposed. Lauren Beaudry and Reggie Knox abstained, noting they were not present at the February meeting.

#### Upcoming Events and Important Dates

Jenny shared the following:

- **Hepatitis C Symposium** – April 10, 2026. Free with registration required; QR code provided. Located in Kent. Jenny offered additional information after the meeting.
- **Prevention Power Hour** – Date TBD. Topic forthcoming.
- **Crimson Table Talks** – Every fourth Thursday of each month (recurring).
- **Statewide Syndemic Summit** – Confirmed for October 2026. ETS leads planning with Syndemic Partners Group providing oversight. PACE will share updates as available.

#### Save-The-Date Feedback

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**Chrissy Marie Ely** raised a practical suggestion: rather than waiting for a polished email with presentation details, send a simple save-the-date as soon as the date is confirmed. Multiple attendees agreed, noting that calendars fill up quickly and many need to request time off from work.

**Angel** confirmed the committee would adopt this practice for its announcements going forward.

### Committee Charge Overview

**Angel** provided a refresher on PACE's purpose: (1) bring people into the CHPC and keep them involved, and (2) plan outreach events and create materials that reach those most affected by HIV. Everything PACE does connects to the Integrated Plan: preventing new infections, improving health outcomes, reducing disparities, and achieving plan goals. Angel noted that what PACE does translates directly to the larger CHPC work, referencing the morning's main meeting.

### 2026 PACE WORK PLAN: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

**Angel** introduced the Work Plan review as the centerpiece of the meeting. Printed copies were distributed. He set ground rules: attendees could stop at any time for clarification or to add ideas, emphasizing this should be a conversation, not a presentation. The sign-in sheet was circulated.

Attendees confirmed they had the printed work plan and agenda to follow along.

#### Key Activity 1: General Communications Management

**Angel** explained that this covers monthly meetings, meeting minutes, executive committee coordination, and end-of-year planning. He highlighted that attendee feedback directly shapes how meetings run. For example, last month's feedback that the committee needed more time led to moving the Work Plan review to the beginning of the meeting.

#### Discussion:

When asked what attendees would change, the response was unanimously positive:

**Jordan:** *"Every meeting is always productive. Everyone's comfortable speaking. The feedback is always clear. What we're supposed to do is always clear. They're engaging, like we did the [dotmocracy activity] thing around the room."*

**Angel** expressed pride in the committee's culture of open sharing and first-person perspectives. He then asked whether attendees wanted the Work Plan visual at the beginning or end of future meetings.

**Chrissy:** *"Probably in the beginning, because that'll keep us on track too. As long as we don't make this the meeting."*

**Decision:** The Work Plan will be a visual at the beginning of every meeting going forward, used to frame (not dominate) the meeting.

#### Key Activity 2: Newsletter Production

**Angel** reviewed the schedule: three newsletters in 2026 (February completed, June/summer, Fall/Winter). The February newsletter is available in three languages, downloadable, and printable. He opened the floor for June newsletter ideas, encouraging members to think beyond written articles — interviews, art, or videos.

#### Content Ideas Discussed:

- **Historical HIV perspective:** **Chrissy** shared a personal story about finding a 1988–1989 pin her mother used to hand out in Waterbury that read "Our church has AIDS." She suggested content showing the history of the epidemic, perhaps featuring someone who has lived with HIV for decades. She referenced her friend Vivian, who battled AZT's side effects, and a Yale study. Chrissy still has an old red ribbon she attaches to clothing.

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- **Waiting room TV distribution:** **Clifford Batson** asked whether the newsletter could be displayed on waiting room TVs at places like Community Health Services (CHS). This idea expanded as multiple members built on it (see Distribution Channel Innovation below).
- **StoryCorps-style interviews:** **Angel** proposed NPR StoryCorps-style paired conversations — two people talking about their experiences, recorded as short video/audio (under 5 minutes) that could be embedded in the interactive newsletter. **Reggie** suggested keeping it time-limited.
- **Youth Subcommittee social media:** **Angel** noted that as the Youth Subcommittee grows, they could create social media content (TikTok, Instagram) that PACE could amplify through its networks.
- **Poems and art:** **Jordan Wynn** offered to contribute poetry from his college work. **Angel** enthusiastically supported including poetry and art, while also noting the committee shouldn't overburden Jordan with too many contributions.
- **Chloe's work perspective:** **David** reminded the group that **Chloe** had been identified as a potential contributor based on her work perspective — a conversation from the February meeting. **Angel** acknowledged this with humor: "We hear you. It might take us a little while, but we'll get there."
- **World Testing Day content:** A member suggested addressing testing anxiety, hesitancy, and denial by outlining what the actual testing procedure looks like, paired with a positive personal interview.
  - *"Briefly outline what the actual testing procedure is so people know what to expect when they go to get tested."*
- **Personal testing story:** **Chrissy** shared a powerful story about her first time testing at AIDS Project Hartford, describing her fear going in and how the experience was ultimately quick, private, and non-intimidating. She identified this as a gap in testing awareness.
- **Anonymous testing video:** The group discussed filming someone taking an HIV test (neck down for anonymity) to show how simple it is. **Reggie** endorsed. **Jordan** volunteered to participate. **Angel** also suggested plugging in the self-HIV test kit. **Chrissy** emphasized keeping it anonymous so viewers aren't deterred.
- **Integrated Plan alignment:** Based on feedback at the February meeting, that it was hard to incorporate plan pillars into personal stories, **Angel** clarified that contributors no longer need to frame around specific pillars — staff will handle that alignment.
  - **Angel:** "That burden will fall on us to make sure we connect those personal stories to the integrated plan. That gives you ample way to be creative, to be free."
- **Stigma Article:** **Jordan** noted that the Ryan White Planning Council recently held a workshop on stigma, intersectionality, and HIV. He suggested an article or blurb on stigma and its impact on people's decisions. **Angel** confirmed stigma came up as a topic from a previous meeting. **Reggie** added that stigma extends to friends, community, and self-disclosure.

### Key Activity 3: Statewide Campaigns

**Angel** transitioned to campaign development, grounding it in the 2025 Ryan White Needs Assessment. He presented key data points and asked members to prioritize which should become statewide campaigns. **David** added that routine testing (raised by **Chrissy** in the earlier CHPC breakout group) was also a potential focus.

### Needs Assessment Data Reviewed:

- 1 in 4 people cannot get the dental care they need
- Nearly 4 in 10 need help paying for food
- 6 out of every 100 experiencing homelessness
- 1 in 3 don't know about syringe services
- Almost 1 in 4 don't know about PEP

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- 1 in 5 have never heard about injectable medications

### Campaign Discussion Highlights

- **Basic needs and Maslow's hierarchy:** **Chrissy** raised the tension between HIV-focused campaigns and basic needs (food, shelter) that may not be HIV-specific. She referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The group agreed these are foundational — if someone is hungry and homeless, they can't focus on health.
- **211 frustrations:** **Chrissy** shared that 211 has become the default referral for everything (shelter beds, detox, housing) but is overwhelmed and not answering questions. **Reggie** questioned whether they have both the capacity and compassion. Members noted people get discouraged after one bad call and give up.
- **Systemic barriers:** **Jordan** gave an impassioned observation about the contradiction of being told to get help while the system makes it nearly impossible — comparing it to being put on a pole with hands tied behind your back and told to get down.
- **Making campaigns hopeful:** **Chrissy** emphasized that campaign content needs to convey hope, not just information. She suggested featuring people with lived experience who have “gotten to the other side” — and multiple pathways (church, housing, family reunification) rather than one person's story.
- **Ongoing series concept:** A member proposed making hope stories a recurring section across all three newsletters — “More Will Be Revealed” — following different people's journeys. The group enthusiastically endorsed this. **David** noted this serves both the campaign and newsletter simultaneously.
- **Case management perspective:** **Lauren Beaudry**, case manager from HRA, offered a 30-year HIV survivor as a potential interviewee. **David** built on this, suggesting each data point could have a personal story immediately behind it — someone accessing dental care, going to a food bank, getting connected to services.
- **Food pantry normalization:** **Jordan** shared a personal experience of going to a food bank for the first time in college and being surprised it was like a real grocery store with name-brand items and no invasive questions. **Chrissy** shared working at Prudential and using the food kitchen due to high bills. **Lauren** described their food pantry as organized like a grocery store, also offering diaper distribution and pet food. **Reggie** mentioned Groton Human Services provides food, \$15 gift cards for toiletries, rent assistance, and utility bill help for the general public.
- **Resource lists:** A member recalled that the committee had decided to include a resource list (housing, food, pantries) in the newsletter. **Reggie** mentioned Groton Human Services' monthly newsletter listing all area pantries with days/times. **Angel** emphasized these are exactly the resources people told the survey they don't know about.
- **PrEP awareness gap:** **Clifford** highlighted that older adults (50s–60s) especially don't know about PrEP, based on his outreach experience. **Reggie** confirmed. **Clifford** mentioned a new PrEP song on YouTube that was played at a recent event. The group discussed potential use (copyright considerations noted by David).
- **IPV awareness for men:** **Angel** raised that the data showed men were unaware of intimate partner violence resources while women didn't know about injectable medications. **David** connected this to the campaigns discussion as a potential future focus. Employment discrimination tied to HIV status was also discussed as connected to stigma (raised by **Clifford**).
- **Dental care campaign:** Extensive discussion. **Jordan** shared paying over high dental costs via CareCredit. **Jordan** emphasized educating people on oral health's broader health implications. A member shared the story of a colleague who died from a tooth infection that spread to his brain. **Angel** decided dental would be saved for the Fall/Winter newsletter and campaign cycle.
  - An attendee suggested demystifying dental visits (what to expect, alternatives like water picks instead of scaling) to reduce fear. **Jordan** shared a childhood dental trauma that deterred him from going for five years.

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### Campaign Format and Prioritization:

**David** summarized: campaigns would take the form of downloadable PDFs, social media content, print materials, and additions to the resource folder. The newsletters are becoming a natural showcase for campaign materials. **Angel** emphasized not taking on too many campaigns at once. The group agreed to focus on the Summer cycle (testing normalization, basic needs/hope stories, PrEP awareness) and save dental care for the Fall cycle.

### Key Activity 4: Community Engagement

#### Social Media Resource Folder

**Jenny** noted the social media resource folder is set up and advertised in the newsletter. It is open for submissions, including from external agencies. Jenny mentioned receiving materials from the CDC to submit.

#### Consumer Advisory Board Partnership

**Charles Hardy** (Middletown) shared that he was recently asked to join the Consumer Advisory Board (CAB) for Community Health Centers in Middletown. The CAB is a place where consumers can voice concerns, complaints, and suggestions for better care. They are developing an electronic flyer (expected next month) to invite new members. **Charles** offered to send the flyer to **David** for incorporation into the newsletter. He also volunteered to share the CHPC newsletter through the Community Health Center network.

#### New Member Experience Discussion

**David** mentioned the task of building a short online orientation course in response to brainstorming by PACE members during previous meetings. **Chrissy** said she appreciated the task because she felt like she was “thrown to the wolves” when she joined. **Angel** asked all members what would have been helpful when they first joined.

- **Language and acronyms:** **Charles** (Middletown) said it took years to understand the terminology. He noted: *“When they start talking this language to a lay person, it’s like you are speaking in a foreign language.”* **Chrissy** agreed, noting that her Ryan White field experience helped out, but the level of detail increased significantly.
- **Buddy system:** The group strongly endorsed a buddy system - less formal than mentorship, more like having someone to sit with and whisper to when acronyms or concepts are unclear.
- **Anonymous question box:** **Chrissy** suggested a question/suggestion box at meetings for folks who aren’t comfortable speaking up.

**Chrissy** asked whether the buddy system should be implemented across all CHPC committees. **Angel** agreed to highlight these ideas to the executive committee.

#### Key Activity 5: Youth Subcommittee Work

**Angel** provided a brief update: **Blaise Gilchrist** and **Jordan Wynn** are leading the Youth Subcommittee and have a meeting planned for April. The committee will support them, but the goal is for them to have genuine ownership.

- **Recruitment:** A member mentioned speaking with Brittany earlier that day, who may have a couple of individuals to recruit. **Angel** asked all members to identify anyone between 17-24.
- **Newsletter recruitment:** The group agreed to include a recruitment piece in the June newsletter with the age range (17–24) prominently featured. An existing link to the interest form would be shared.
- **Age range visibility:** **Chrissy** suggested leading with the age range in any advertisement or recruitment material to immediately catch the right audience’s attention.
- **Practical note:** **Jordan** observed that older youth (18+) are less restricted by parental consent and school schedules, making them easier to engage.

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### NEWSLETTER TECHNICAL UPDATE

**David** confirmed: English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole newsletter versions are up on the CHPC website. The interactive HTML version is still being finalized by Emily (communications/tech team), who is working on embedding it on the website while maintaining interactivity. Expected within the next couple of weeks.

### ATTENDANCE

Angel Ruiz, Blaise Gilchrist, Carl Ferris, Charles Hardy, Chloe Johnson, Chrissy Marie Ely, Clifford Batson, Lauren Beaudry, David Reyes, Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos, Jordan Wynn, William Reggie Knox

### ACTION ITEMS

- **David Reyes:**
  - Finalize interactive HTML newsletter with Emily
  - Coordinate with Jordan on poetry submissions for June newsletter
  - Coordinate short-form video content (testing normalization, StoryCorps-style interviews)
  - Incorporate Charles's Consumer Advisory Board flyer into newsletter distribution
  - Prepare the June newsletter content framework and timeline
  - Circulate the March meeting summary for review
  - Explore buddy system and question box implementation with executive committee
  - Reach out to Chloe for work-perspective contribution in upcoming newsletter
- **Clifford Harper & Chrissy Marie Ely:**
  - Compile list of locations with TV/digital displays (waiting rooms, apartment buildings, DMVs, gas stations, senior housing) with email contacts in Excel
- **Jordan Wynn:**
  - Locate and submit college poetry to David (cc Angel and Jenny)
  - Coordinate with Blaise on Youth Subcommittee April meeting
  - Potentially participate in anonymous testing video
- **Blaise Gilchrist:**
  - Continue Youth Subcommittee planning; confirm April meeting date
- **Charles Hardy (Middletown):**
  - Send Consumer Advisory Board electronic flyer to David
  - Help disseminate CHPC newsletter through Community Health Center network
- **Jenny Bobadilla-Pincos:**
  - Provide hepatitis symposium registration details to interested members
  - Submit CDC materials to social media resource folder
  - Adopt save-the-date practice for future event communications
- **Angel Ruiz & Reggie Knox:**
  - Bring buddy system and anonymous question box ideas to executive committee

### MEETING FEEDBACK

Summary Table from Interactive Meeting Feedback Poll (n=9)					
Questions		Yes (A)	No (B)	Unsure (C)	(D)
1	CHPC Member?	71%	29%	*	*
2	I understood the meeting information and materials	100%	0%	*	*
3	The meeting felt inclusive and respectful of all voices	100%	*	*	*
4	I would give this committee meeting a grade of...	100%	*	*	*
5	One thing I liked about the meeting was: we got so much done; we all worked together; we have one voice; always engaging; discussion presentation; everyone's participation; how engaging the meeting was with other members; inclusion of all voices; lots of ideas that become reality within the integrated				
6	One suggestion to IMPROVE the committee meeting is: not at this time; nothing, keep up the great work; nothing; none at this time, maybe better room, but we made it work!; no; nothing; continue to move into action plans; nothing				

DRAFT