

CONNECTICUT HIV PLANNING CONSORTIUM

The CHPC Newsletter

June 2026

PRIDE MONTH ISSUE



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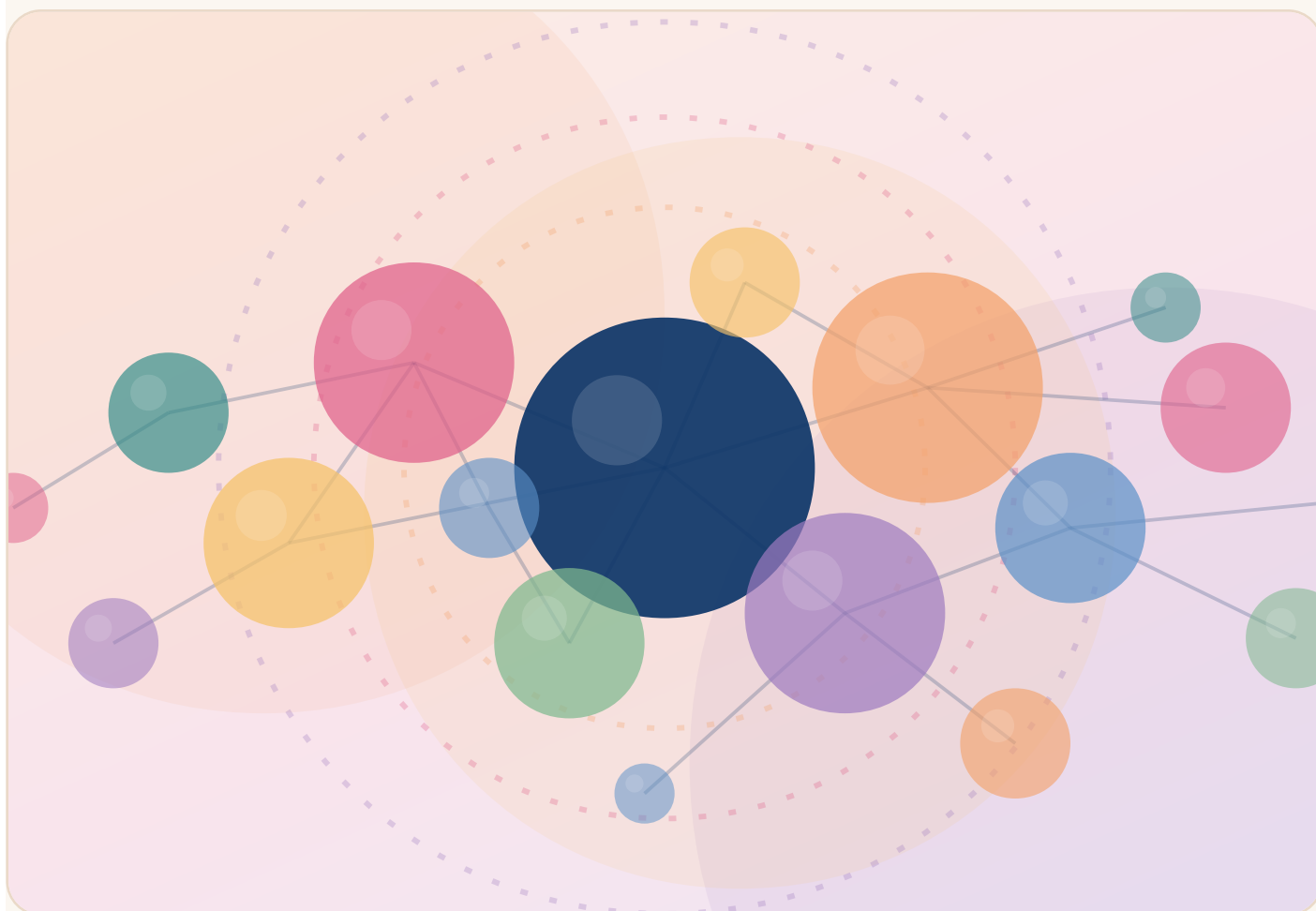
FROM PACE • PRIDE MONTH

This One Is for You

Happy Pride, Connecticut. June pulls us back outside and back toward each other, and this year it carries a message we want every corner of the state to hear: prevention, care, and dignity are for everybody. No exceptions, no fine print.

This issue is proof of that. You will hear from a community member who claimed pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) on her own terms, get the campaign your committee built and launched, and read what it means now that Connecticut has adopted its 2027 to 2031 HIV plan. There is even a word search at the end, with answers hiding in plain sight throughout these pages.

Thanks, as always, for being the reason any of this reaches the people it is meant for.



A community, connected

COMMUNITY FEATURE

PrEP Through a Straight Black Woman's Lens

By Monique Davis • Outreach Prevention Coordinator, Community Health Services (CHS), Hartford

Re-entering the dating world at 47 after a 24-year relationship has been both eye-opening and deeply reflective for me. Growing up in a conservative environment, conversations about sexual health were limited, and even now, many straight women do not see PrEP as something meant for them. While I have not fully stepped back into dating yet, there is a real sense of empowerment in knowing that if and when I decide to, I have options to protect myself and take control of my sexual health.

For me, PrEP represents more than prevention. It represents choice, confidence, and the ability to make informed decisions for myself without fear or shame.

Being a Black woman adds another layer, because culture, upbringing, and lived experiences all influence how we view relationships, risk, and healthcare conversations. That is why representation in education and outreach matters so much.

In my work as an outreach prevention coordinator at Community Health Services (CHS), an inner-city Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Hartford, I focus on PrEP education, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, and dispelling myths. I have seen firsthand how barriers, like messaging that does not reflect middle-aged women, stigma around sexual health conversations, or providers not routinely discussing PrEP with straight women, can prevent women from accessing information and protection. I have also noticed that many straight men over 30 do not see themselves reflected in current PrEP campaigns either, which can make conversations around prevention feel even more disconnected.

What is needed is culturally relevant, relatable education and supportive providers who approach these conversations without judgment. Finding that support personally was empowering for me, and it is one of the reasons I am passionate about helping others feel informed, represented, and able to make choices that protect their health on their own terms.

THE PLAN IN A LIFE • PREVENT

What Monique describes is the Prevent pillar made personal. Connecticut's plan calls for putting PrEP and prevention within reach of everyone who could benefit, and for outreach that actually reflects the people it hopes to protect. A straight Black woman in her forties, choosing PrEP on her own terms, is that pillar doing exactly what it was written to do.

CAMPAIGN SPOTLIGHT

Our PrEP & Routine Testing Campaign Is Live

What Monique just described in the first person is exactly what this campaign sets out to fix. Built by the committee in response to the 2025 Ryan White Needs Assessment, where community members told us plainly that they do not always know PrEP is for everyone, or where to get routine testing, the six-slide carousel is cleared and ready to share statewide. It also rides a tailwind: since January 2023, Connecticut law has asked providers to offer an HIV test to everyone over 13 in primary care and emergency settings, on an opt-out basis.

This is a standing campaign, not a one-day push. The materials live in the folder year-round, so you can run them whenever it fits your community, with moments like National HIV Testing Day on June 27 as a natural time to lean in.



A preview of the carousel. The full set lives in the shareables folder, ready to brand and post.

Prevention is for everybody.

#ThisIs4U • #ThisIs4UCT • #U=U

Posting it takes about five minutes

- 1 **Open the folder** and grab the carousel, captions, and hashtags. One link, everything in one place.
- 2 **Drop your agency logo and location** into the Canva template. The spaces are already built in.
- 3 **Post whenever it fits**, and lean in around moments like National HIV Testing Day on June 27. Keep #ThisIs4U and #ThisIs4UCT in the caption. Want a Reel or TikTok? Export the slides as a video (MP4) and it animates itself.

Applying **#ThisIs4U** consistently is how we will track posts and gauge reach for the first time at this level of detail. The tag **#U=U** stands for Undetectable equals Untransmittable: a person on treatment with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV sexually.



Get the campaign
kit

[cthivplanning.org/
social-media-
shareables](https://cthivplanning.org/social-media-shareables)

Scan to open the shareables folder: the swipe-through carousel, captions, and hashtags, all ready to brand with your logo and post.

RESOURCE FOLDER

One Place, Built for You to Use

Let us be honest with each other: the Social Media Resource Folder has been underused. We all get one more link a day, and one more is easy to ignore. So this campaign is the pilot to change that. If PACE members use the folder consistently, the rest of CHPC follows.

Inside you will find the new PrEP & Routine Testing campaign assets and a growing community library. The ask is simple: download what you need, post it, and add your own. Testing-day photos, agency flyers, event graphics, all of it makes the folder more useful for the next person.



Browse & submit
cthivplanning.org

New here? The submit form walks you through it: your name, contact, intended use, and the file. We review and file it where it belongs. Scan the code to browse the folder and add your own materials.

QUICK REFERENCE

PrEP Isn't One Thing

Part of the myth is that PrEP means one daily pill for one kind of person. It does not. These are the options the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends, all highly effective at preventing HIV when used as prescribed:

DAILY ORAL

A pill, once a day

A pill taken every day. The longest-established option.

EVERY 2 MONTHS

An injection

Long-acting injectable cabotegravir, given by a provider on a set schedule.

TWICE A YEAR

A shot every 6 months

Injectable lenacapavir, approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in June 2025 and CDC-recommended.

96–100%

Fewer new infections in trials of the twice-yearly option

Ask your provider what fits your life, or find a local access point through the resource folder. In clinical trials, the twice-yearly option reduced new HIV infections by roughly 96 to 100 percent.

Source: HIV.gov and CDC, MMWR 2025.

INTEGRATED PLAN • 2027 TO 2031

The Plan Is Approved. Here Is What It Means.

Every five years, Connecticut sets the roadmap for how it prevents and treats HIV. This month, after a multi-year effort, CHPC members adopted the 2027 to 2031 Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Plan, voting to approve it overwhelmingly.

27

In favor

1

Opposed

1

Abstention

This is not a light touch-up. The plan modernizes Connecticut's whole approach and, in its own words, moves the state from managing the epidemic to ending it. It applies a syndemic lens, treating HIV alongside hepatitis C (HCV), sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and substance use disorder (SUD)

rather than in silos, and builds toward a “no wrong door” system where any point of entry connects a person to care.

The plan grew out of community input, including the Ryan White Needs Assessment, and a careful look at the strengths and gaps in each pillar. It was shaped across the consortium’s standing committees and carries formal Letters of Concurrence from partner planning bodies before members adopted it by vote. In plain terms: many partners built this together, the community helped shape it, and CHPC members voted to approve it.

The Four Pillars

Diagnose

Expand routine, opt-out HIV and HCV testing in ERs and community settings to close the late-testing gap.

Treat

Close the viral-suppression gap by removing barriers like housing, transportation, and stigma.

Prevent

Prioritize long-acting PrEP, doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis (DoxyPEP), condoms, and harm-reduction services.

Respond

Detect and respond to clusters faster through surveillance and close community partnership.

What We Are Aiming For

2031

Zero new HIV transmissions in
Connecticut

95%

Viral suppression

+10%

Clinical testing

Now it is ours to carry. Approval was the start, not the finish line. The next five years are about turning these goals into reality in our own communities. That is where PACE comes in, and where you do too: every conversation, every post, every testing day is the plan in motion.



Read the full plan
ctshivplanning.org

Scan to read the complete 2027 to 2031 Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Plan.

COMMUNITY VOICES

Getting to Know Me

By Arthur Harris (Cocoa Blac) · Community Member & published poet

Arthur Harris had just come from the recording studio and an overnight shift when we talked, and he still gave the conversation his time. A published poet who now records music as Cocoa Blac, he has been living with HIV for nearly seventeen years. He asked that we call this “Getting to know me.”

He traces the start to a frightening time. “When I was coming out, around 2009, a lot of people were catching it, and they were really young, like 17 years old. It scared me.” The stigma then was heavy, and so was home. His father did not accept his sexuality, and at one point put him out of the house. “A lot of it was survival,” he says. He looked for a place to feel accepted, leaning on people like Kamora Herrington, who ran the organization True Colors, and a caseworker who took him places to get involved. Still, the groups he found never quite fit. He wanted to see more people like himself.

Honestly, I am 34 and I am still looking for it. I have been through a lot, but I am still looking.

Writing is where he puts that down. “It is a coping mechanism,” he says. “Whenever I am not in a good space, I write something, a poem or a song, or I journal. It gets out a lot of what I have been holding in.” He published his last poetry collection in 2017 and then moved into music. Lately, he says, a lot of people keep telling him to get back into poetry, and he is in a space to do it. James Baldwin and Langston Hughes are the writers he names.

Ask him what people get wrong about HIV and he answers without hesitation. “I would say it is not a death sentence,” he says, “and it is not easily caught.” He once wrote a poem about having HIV, about the shame and being made to feel like he did not belong, and performed it when he was younger.

What gives him hope is the long view: longer lives, better medications, and maybe, one day, a cure. What worries him is nearer: the people who are falling out of care, or who do not want to know their status, or who do not have insurance to see a doctor. His message to them, and to a younger version of himself, is plain. “It is okay to get tested and take care of yourself,” he says. “Live long, live strong.”

THE PLAN IN A LIFE · TREAT

Arthur has been living well with HIV for nearly seventeen years, which is the Treat pillar in human form. The plan’s aim is plain and hard at once: help every person living with HIV stay in care and stay healthy by clearing the barriers, from insurance to stigma, that push people out. His answer is his own life, stay connected, take care of yourself, live long and live strong. And it starts, he reminds us, with a test.

MEET THE COMMITTEE

One Consortium, Working as One

This newsletter is produced by PACE, but PACE is one part of a larger whole. The Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium does its work through standing committees that share the load:

One consortium, working as one

Executive

Steers the consortium and reviews products before they go out, including the volunteerism letter.

Ending the Syndemic (ETS)

Drives strategy across HIV, hepatitis C, STDs, and substance use.

Needs Assessment Projects (NAP)

Listens to the community and turns what it hears into evidence.

Quality & Performance Measures (QPM)

Keeps the work measurable and accountable.

Public Awareness & Community Engagement (PACE)

Recruits, mentors, and gets clear, caring messaging out across the state. That is us.

What you are holding is one of PACE's contributions to that shared effort. The campaign in these pages, the plan you helped approve, the youth subcommittee taking shape: none of it belongs to a single committee. It is the consortium moving together. We meet the third Wednesday of every month, and you do not need a title to take part.



Explore the
committees

[cthivplanning.org/
committees](https://cthivplanning.org/committees)

Scan to find meeting times and how to join any committee. No title required, just show up.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

One Big Statewide Hepatitis Awareness Event

By Venesha Heron • May 19, 2026

In recognition of Hepatitis Awareness Month and National Hepatitis Testing Day, nine partners across Connecticut came together for the 2026 One Big Statewide Testing and Awareness Event to increase awareness, expand access to testing, and strengthen linkage-to-care efforts statewide.



Photos: CCMC, CRT, and ACT

97

Individuals screened

100%

Got same-day results

10

Linked to follow-up care

This collaborative initiative focused on education and awareness and a comprehensive approach to syndemic screening, alongside same-day linkage to treatment, addressing HIV, hepatitis C, and substance use disorder while increasing access to integrated prevention, testing, linkage, and treatment services.

Of the 97 people screened, 87 (90%) were non-reactive and 10 (10%) were hepatitis C antibody positive, with 1 RNA positive. All 10 were linked to follow-up care or treatment, and 1 person initiated treatment on June 1, 2026. Participants reflected the communities the work is meant to reach: 66 (68%) identified as male and 30 (31%) as female, and 42 (43%) identified as people who use or inject drugs.

A major milestone was the release of Connecticut's first-ever Hepatitis C Elimination Plan in Summer 2025, establishing a statewide framework to coordinate action toward eliminating hepatitis C as a public health threat by 2030. The event also supported Connecticut's Universal Viral Hepatitis C Testing Law (Section 19a-7o, 2023).

We extend sincere gratitude to all community partners, healthcare providers, advocates, and organizations that contributed to this year's successful statewide effort. **Together we can eliminate viral hepatitis.** #HepFreeCT · Test. Treat. Cure.

KNOW YOUR BENEFITS

SNAP & Medicaid: What Is Actually Changing

A 2025 federal law, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, changes who has to prove they are working in order to keep food help and health coverage. Here is the plain version, with sources so you can check it yourself.

The short version: more adults will need to show 80 hours a month (about 20 hours a week) of work, school, training, or volunteering to keep food help through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and, before long, health coverage through Medicaid (called HUSKY in Connecticut). Most people this affects already work. The biggest risk is the new paperwork itself. And volunteer hours can count, which is where the CHPC comes in.

- 1 **Food help (SNAP).** Adults without children at home must now document at least 80 hours a month of work, training, school, or volunteering. The law widens the ages this applies to, from 18-54 up to 18-64, and now includes parents of children 14 and older. These changes started rolling out in Connecticut in November 2025.
- 2 **Health coverage (Medicaid / HUSKY).** For the first time, adults ages 19 to 64 with HUSKY coverage for low-income adults will face a similar 80-hour rule, expected to take effect in 2027. Nearly a dozen exemptions apply, including "medical frailty." HIV is specifically named among the serious conditions that can count, though a June 2026 federal rule adds that the condition must also significantly limit a person's ability to work, so the exemption is not automatic.
- 3 **The catch is paperwork.** In Connecticut, about 73% of adults on Medicaid already work, and most people affected qualify for an exemption. Even so, the state comptroller warns that many who are working or exempt could lose coverage just from the new documentation. State estimates suggest 100,000 to 200,000 residents could lose HUSKY coverage for various reasons.
- 4 **Volunteer hours can count.** That is why PACE has recommended a letter of volunteerism that members and community participants could use to document their hours. To be clear, this is a PACE recommendation and product, not a PACE-issued document. It goes to the Executive Committee to refine and approve, so it is a consortium-wide effort. More to come.

Sources: CT DSS, Federal H.R.1 updates; United Way of Connecticut 211; CT Mirror; CT Mirror, June 2026 (medical frailty).

YOUTH SUBCOMMITTEE

Building the Next Generation of the CHPC

The Youth Subcommittee held its first orientation this June, in the evening so school-age and working members can attend. It will be featured here every issue as a standing invitation.

CT HIV PLANNING CONSORTIUM
PACE COMMITTEE
YOUTH SUBCOMMITTEE / 2026

— A CALL FOR VOICES, AGES 17-24

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD.



Young people are missing from nearly every conversation that shapes HIV prevention and care in Connecticut. We're building a subcommittee to change that — and we're saving a seat for you.

01 / YOUR ROLE

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Review outreach materials — flyers, graphics, social posts
- Shape HIV messaging that actually reaches your generation
- Create content for campaigns, newsletters, and social feeds
- Collaborate with peers and mentors across the state

02 / WHAT YOU GET

WHAT YOU'LL GAIN

- Community service or school volunteer hours
- Leadership and résumé-building experience
- Mentorship from caring peers and public-health leaders
- A real seat at the table — youth voices, taken seriously

17-24

ELIGIBLE AGES

NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED.

Just your voice, your perspective, and the willingness to bring both into the room.

— GET INVOLVED

SEND A NOTE, SAVE YOUR SEAT.

Reach out to **David Reyes**, PACE Committee Support Staff
reyes@xsector.com · Cross Sector Consulting

CHPC × PACE

CTHIVPLANNING.ORG

Know someone 17 to 24 who would be a good fit? The fastest path in is passing their name straight to **Blaise Gilchrist** or **Jordan Wynn**. The group is youth-led by design: members shape what it does, and adults support along the way.

First meeting

Tuesday, June 30, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., held virtually. Participation can count toward volunteer or extracurricular hours.



Refer a young person

reyes@xsector.com

Scan to send a name, or pass it to Blaise or Jordan directly.

At Peace

A poem by Jordan Wynn

No campaign and no statistics here. Just one morning at the shore, and a quiet reminder that all of us, the people living with and working alongside HIV included, deserve peace, warmth, and a good day.

I woke up to the symphony of the beach this morning,
Ocean waves crashing like a rhythmic heartbeat,
Seagulls crying out, their calls piercing the crisp air,
Ocean mist clinging to my windowpane, fresh and briny.

Stepping out, I walk along the shore,
The soft sand sinks beneath my feet,
Blue land crabs scuttle away,
Tiny creatures darting like fleeting thoughts.

AHHH!

The water is a sharp embrace, cold as it sneaks onto the sand,
Touching my toes, a shiver racing up my spine.
The tide pulls back, whispering secrets to the sea,
I want to go with it.

The sky transforms into a canvas,
Orange, pink, yellow, and blue swirling together,
A masterpiece painted by nature's hand,
Allowing me to bask in all of its warm embrace.

Then, the viejo appears, grey hair catching the light,
He nods knowingly, as if he can sense the heaviness in my heart,
He says, "The ocean will wash away your worries, in its vastness lies
peace."

And in that moment, the waves whisper back,
Promising solace, a gentle embrace,
As we stand together, the beauty of the beach,
Our worries dissolving into the rhythm of the sea.

Jordan Wynn • Planning Program Coordinator, Ryan White Planning Council

PLAY

Integrated Plan Word Search

Every word below appears somewhere in this issue. Search across the grid — horizontal, vertical, or diagonal — to find them all.

U	C	V	Q	M	F	O	F	L	P	R	I	D	E
H	X	H	F	B	I	L	B	R	A	B	I	Z	Q
T	W	X	U	Y	P	B	D	E	K	D	Y	D	A
G	A	T	N	E	V	E	R	P	N	V	X	I	J
S	S	E	O	Y	U	D	P	O	K	L	I	A	M
D	L	C	R	P	M	F	P	O	H	Z	E	G	V
A	A	P	O	T	W	S	G	Z	B	S	F	N	H
C	C	H	T	L	E	X	E	A	Y	G	Y	O	O
D	C	C	M	R	A	U	M	N	N	C	O	S	K
K	E	H	P	D	U	G	D	I	L	E	K	E	H
X	S	P	B	F	I	E	T	W	O	R	E	O	E
I	S	E	N	T	M	S	C	N	H	E	A	I	S
J	K	R	S	I	E	Z	F	A	I	P	D	K	O
P	D	P	C	T	E	Q	B	U	P	Z	V	G	R

FIND THESE

PREP

TESTING

SYNDEMIC

DIAGNOSE

TREAT

PREVENT

RESPOND

STIGMA

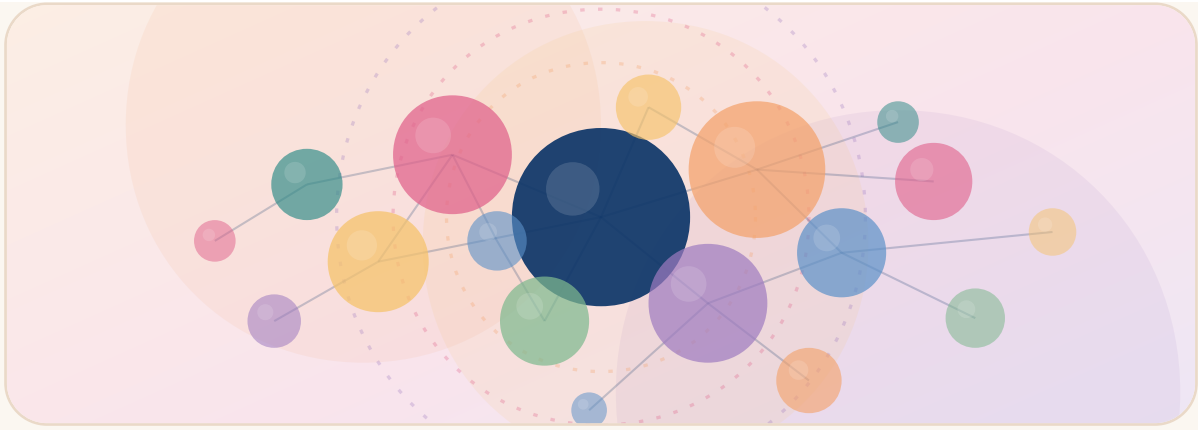
ACCESS

PACE

CHPC

PRIDE

Each word ties back to the Integrated Plan and the stories in this issue: the four pillars (**Diagnose, Treat, Prevent, Respond**), the **syndemic** approach, and the work of **PACE** and the **CHPC**.



The CHPC Newsletter

JUNE 2026 · PRIDE MONTH ISSUE

Have something to share?

Stories, art, poetry, agency campaigns, or photos — we would love to include it.
Email reyes@xsector.com.

Quick Links

CHPC · cthivplanning.org

Shareables · the social media folder

Next CHPC meeting & more · cthivplanning.org



CHPC online
cthivplanning.org



Campaign kit
shareables folder



Read this online
all three languages

Produced by the Public Awareness & Community Engagement (PACE) Committee of the Connecticut HIV Planning Consortium.

Translated into English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Prevention, care, and dignity are for everybody.