

**Ryan White Planning Council of the Philadelphia Part A EMA
Positive Committee
Meeting Minutes
October 19, 2015
12:00-2:00p.m.**

Office of HIV Planning, 340 N. 12th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107

Present: PH (19), PA (2), NJ (1)

Staff: Nicole Johns, Antonio Boone, Jennifer Hayes

Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Introductions: D. Gana called the meeting to order at 12:25p.m. He read the mission statement.¹ A moment of silence followed. Those present then introduced themselves.

Approval of Agenda: D. Gana presented the agenda for approval. **Motion:** M. White moved, L. Way seconded to approve the agenda. **Motion passed:** All in favor.

Approval of Minutes (*September 14, 2015*): D. Gana presented the minutes for approval. **Motion:** M. White moved, L. Way seconded to approve the minutes. **Motion passed:** All in favor.

Report of Chair:

None.

Report of Staff:

N. Johns introduced Antonio Boone, the newest OHP staff member. She stated that Antonio would be working as a Health Planner focused on HIV prevention.

Action Item:

- **Co-Chair Election**

N. Johns announced that 4 members had been nominated for Positive Committee Co-Chair. She said these included G.T., C.S., R.M., and N. Santiago. 3 of these individuals were present at the meeting. Additionally, J.M. and D. Gana were nominated for the position.

N. Johns said the vote would be conducted by a secret ballot. D. Gana stated that all nominees would give a speech about themselves and their qualifications for the position. All nominees present gave brief speeches.

After the votes were tabulated by N. Johns, Nancy Santiago was announced as the new Positive Committee Co-Chair.

Discussion Items:

- **Retention in care discussion**

Postponed until next meeting.

¹ Mission statement: The Positive Committee supports and enhances the role of people living with HIV/AIDS to empower their participation in the decision-making process of the Ryan White Part A Planning Council and the HIV Prevention Planning Group.

- **Brainstorm future topics**

N. Johns stated that the Positive Committee often invited speakers or discussed topics of general interest at their meetings. She asked the group to brainstorm topics they'd be interested in discussing at future meetings. M. White suggested inviting Penn Dental to the group. D. Gana said the group had discussing inviting Heshie Zinman of the LGBTEI to future meetings to discuss HIV and Aging. G.T. suggested inviting a yoga instructor to meetings, and K. Carter added that the group might discuss stress reduction. D. Wingate suggested discussing ways that people who were ineligible for food stamps could obtain food vouchers.

J.G. asked the group to discuss a Medicaid card to help consumers pay for transportation. N. Santiago reported that clients needed a dollar to use Medicaid transportation. N. Johns noted that transportation had been a frequently-discussed topic in recent months. She said she'd be distributing a transportation survey at the end of the meeting today. She noted that the Planning Council did not have any authority over the Medicaid transportation program, but was investigating how Ryan White might be used to fill gaps in transportation.

K. Carter stated that an MATP representative had recently spoken to the Planning Council. He noted that she had encouraged consumers with feedback to collect detailed information before calling the state MATP program with feedback. He said MATP representatives might attend more RWPC meetings in the future. He added that consumers who had issues with Medicaid transportation could file a grievance with their case managers.

G.T. stated that she worked in Home Health Care. She explained that Home Health Care clients had to make appointments for Logisticare a week in advance. She added that clients and staff members often had to remind Logisticare providers to pick up patients.

M. Coleman suggested discussing LGBTQ youth who were homeless. He recommended the group invite YHEP to give a presentation.

N. John said anyone who wanted to make a suggestion for future topics could email or call her at any time.

M.T. suggested the office host professional development courses to help educate individuals in the community about finding jobs, furthering their careers, and re-entering the workforce after time off work. She requested that the Positive Committee invite groups to speak who helped community members stay healthy physically and mentally. She noted that patients at Esperanza Health Center participated in a course on caring for their health.

M. White stated that housing was a pressing issue for PLWHA. He suggested the group focus future discussions on housing and homelessness.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

- **Transportation survey**

N. Johns distributed a brief survey on transportation to the group. She collected the surveys after they were completed, and she said she would report back on the results in the future.

Announcements: M. White stated that a rally would be held in Harrisburg. He said transportation and food would be provided at the event.

M. Coleman stated that Philabundance needed volunteers for meal distribution during the holiday season.

K. Carter stated that a Pumpkin Ball event would be held in New Hope, PA, at the Bucks County Firehouse, on October 24th.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by general consensus at 1:30p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jennifer Hayes, Staff

Handouts distributed at the meeting:

- Meeting Agenda
- August 10, 2015 Meeting Minutes
- Transportation Survey
- OHP Calendar

Monday, October 19, 2015

12:00-2:00pm

Office of HIV Planning 340 N. 12th Street Suite 203
Philadelphia, PA

Mission Statement- The Positive Committee supports and enhances the role of people living with HIV/AIDS to empower their participation in the decision-making process of the Ryan White Part A Planning Council and the HIV Prevention Planning Group.

○ Call to Order/Moment of Silence
Introductions

○ Approval of Agenda
○ Approval of Minutes

○ Report of Chair
• Participation
Acknowledgements

○ Report of Staff

○ Action Item: Co-Chair Election

○ Discussion Items
• Retention in care discussion
• Brainstorm future topics

○ Old Business

○ New Business

○ Announcements

○ Adjournment

AGENDA

**PLEASE TURN ALL CELL PHONES AND PAGERS TO
SILENT OR VIBRATE.**

*The next meeting of the Positive Committee is
November 9, 2015 from 12:00-2:00PM at 340 N. 12th Street, Suite 203,
Philadelphia, PA 19107. Please refer to the Office of HIV Planning calendar
of events for committee meetings & updates (www.hivphilly.org). If you
require any special assistance, please contact the office at least 5 days in
advance.*

POSITIVE COMMITTEE

**Ryan White Planning Council of the Philadelphia Part A EMA
Positive Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2015
12:00-2:00p.m.
Office of HIV Planning, 340 N. 12th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107**

Present: PH (20), PA (2), NJ (1)

Guests: Evelyn Torres (AACO), Shoshanna Santos (AACO)

Staff: Nicole Johns, Jennifer Hayes

Call to Order/Moment of Silence/Introductions: D. Gana called the meeting to order at 12:10p.m. He read the mission statement.¹ A moment of silence followed. Those present then introduced themselves and participated in an icebreaker activity.

Approval of Agenda: D. Gana presented the agenda for approval. Motion: M. White moved, L. Way seconded to approve the agenda. Motion passed: All in favor.

Approval of Minutes (August 10, 2015): D. Gana presented the minutes for approval. Motion: J.M. moved, G.M. seconded to approve the minutes. Motion passed: All in favor.

Report of Chair:

D. Gana announced that his term as Positive Committee Co-Chair was ending today. He stated that nominations for the position would be held toward the end of today's meeting.

- **Participation Acknowledgments**

D. Gana acknowledged participants who were attending their first Positive Committee meeting. He presented them with a token of their participation.

Report of Staff:

N. Johns stated that the October Positive Committee meeting would be rescheduled to the 3rd Monday of October.

Special Presentations:

- **DEFA Overview (Evelyn Torres, AACO)**

E. Torres noted that she worked at the AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO). She stated that many AACO programs were designed to help consumers. She said she'd be reviewing the Direct Emergency Financial Assistance (DEFA) program today, and welcomed all participants to ask questions. She added that she'd be distributing Client Services Unit cards and DEFA applications in English and Spanish. She noted that Johanna Santos, the supervisor of the AACO Client Services Unit (CSU), was in attendance at today's meeting and spoke English and Spanish. She added that F. Brown, another guest at today's meeting, administered the DEFA program as part of PHMC.

¹ Mission statement: The Positive Committee supports and enhances the role of people living with HIV/AIDS to empower their participation in the decision-making process of the Ryan White Part A Planning Council and the HIV Prevention Planning Group.

E. Torres announced that she would provide an overview of DEFA, food vouchers, transportation, permanent rental assistance, and emergency medications. She explained that DEFA was only available in Philadelphia and the PA counties, but was not available in NJ due to the way services were prioritized in the state of NJ. She noted that DEFA paid for first and last month's rent, back rent, mortgages, utilities, heating oil, and HIV medications. She explained that DEFA was an emergency program, and that individuals who needed permanent housing assistance would need to apply for a separate housing program (HOPWA or Section 8). She stated that the wait time for housing through HOPWA was about 7 years or 1 year for individuals who were homeless. She noted that the HOPWA program paid for 70% of housing and required individuals to meet medical qualifications. She said DEFA and the HOWPA program did not have emergency housing available.

E. Torres reiterated that DEFA was an emergency program. She said case managers would assess consumers for emergencies and assist them in applying for DEFA if circumstances warranted. She encouraged participants to ensure that case managers filled out DEFA applications completely and correctly. She stated that DEFA would pay back rent for individuals who were in danger of being evicted and for utilities in the event of a shutoff notice.

E. Torres stated that consumers could apply for DEFA assistance up to \$2000 per household of 1-2 persons within a 12 month period. She said that the limit was \$2500 per households of 3 or more persons within a 12 month period. She noted that DEFA money could be used for more than one need, but was limited to the stated maximums per year (a year past first use, not a calendar year). She explained that individuals in subsidized housing programs or receiving outside rental insurance were not eligible for DEFA housing assistance. She stated that Ryan White was a payer of last resort; thus, it could not cover expenses that were payable through other programs.

E. Torres stated that turnover for processing and receiving DEFA funding took about 2-3 weeks. She explained that checks were mailed directly to landlords or utility companies. She encouraged individuals applying for DEFA to ensure that their landlords actually owned the property. K. Carter asked if DEFA assistance was available for subleases. E. Torres replied that it was, but informed the group that only property owners could sublease dwellings and receive DEFA subsidies.

N.S. asked if DEFA could be used to pay for 2 utility bills at the same time. E. Torres responded that it could, as long as the consumer had a shutoff notice for both companies. J.G. asked if DEFA could be used to pay rent immediately following move-in (e.g. second or third month's rent). E. Torres said it could not. She explained that consumers could only apply for first and last month's rent or security deposits. K. Carter asked if DEFA could be used to pay for property damages. F. Brown responded that repairing damages was between consumers and their landlords.

J.G. asked, in the event that he owed back rent as well as utilities, if he could use DEFA to pay both costs. E. Torres said he could, as long as the cost was under the limit and he had shutoff/eviction notices as relevant. E. Torres stated that food vouchers were available in NJ, Philadelphia, and the PA counties in the amount of up to \$300 annually. She stated that an additional \$50 was available for each additional household member up to a maximum of \$600. She said that agencies had food vouchers available in their offices. She emphasized that DEFA was a payer of last resort for food vouchers. She explained that it was only designed for emergencies and not to provide assistance on a regular basis. She noted that case managers may refer clients to food banks. C.S. noted that he was staying at an institution that did not provide vegetarian meals. He asked if he'd be able to obtain additional funding to satisfy his nutritional needs through DEFA. E. Torres replied that he likely would not, as he was being served meals at an institution. J.G. noted that he was diabetic. He asked if

he would be eligible for DEFA assistance to meet his nutritional needs. E. Torres said he likely would. M. White explained that ShopRite and the Fresh Grocer, two stores that accepted food vouchers, had recently merged, and both now accepted food vouchers. E. Torres explained that MANNA was a home delivery program that provided meals to individuals with a medical need for the service. J.M. stated that individuals who attended nutritional classes at MANNA received gift certificates for food after they completed the class.

J.G. noted that he was receiving \$80 in food vouchers. He asked if he could receive the rest of the \$300 maximum. E. Torres reiterated that the amount of emergency food assistance was based on individual need, which was determined by the initial assessment with a case manager.

E. Torres noted that PHMC provided transportation assistance through Ryan White. She stated that transportation was available to medical case management appointments, outpatient mental health and drug and alcohol treatment, and support groups, along with any other Ryan White funded services. She said transportation could not be provided to the grocery store or court dates. She noted that transportation services required 48 hour advance notice and included tokens, cab vouchers, and mileage reimbursement. A community member asked if she could get a copy of today's presentation. She noted that her case manager was not aware of some services that were available in the community. E. Torres said she'd get her a copy of the presentation, and encouraged participants to provide their case managers with more information about DEFA. K. Carter asked if they could ask case managers about why they were denied for DEFA assistance. E. Torres said they could.

R.B. said he was unhappy with his case manager. E. Torres suggested he change case managers. She said she would also provide more information on how individuals could file complaints about their case managers. She stated that individuals who felt they were being discriminated against for services should file a complaint. She encouraged individuals to call the AACO Healthcare Information Helpline if they did not have a proper redress policy at their agency. A community member asserted that some agencies stated that they had run out of food vouchers. E. Torres said sometimes agencies did run out of food vouchers, based on the amount of time required for reconciliation with PHMC.

J.M. asked how food vouchers were distributed. F. Brown stated that gift card distribution and denominations varied based on the agencies. M. Coleman asked if all funded agencies issued food vouchers. E. Torres replied that they did not. She remarked that individuals should get case managers to make sure they were receiving all services they were eligible for. She noted that consumers were able to get quick referrals for case management.

E. Torres stated that access to Ryan White transportation services was also based on need. M. Coleman said that other programs were also available that provided transportation. E. Torres concurred, and stated that clients who were eligible for programs like Logisticare were required to use those services prior to utilizing Ryan White services. A community member noted that using Logisticare services required 7 days notice. She added that consumers had some issues utilizing Logisticare. E. Torres noted that Logisticare was not a Ryan White program. She encouraged individuals to become familiar with Logisticare requirements. A community member said that Logisticare had to be approved through doctors. E. Torres stated that Ryan White transportation was available for transporting clients to any Ryan White services not covered by Logisticare. She reiterated that using Ryan White transportation was available pending an assessment of individual needs and emergency situations.

E. Torres explained that DEFA, food vouchers, and transportation were administered by the Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC). She stated that the three programs had separate applications and guidelines. She noted that individuals who wished to use these services needed to be Ryan White certified and present their certification cards. She stated that individuals who wished to apply for these services should go through their medical case managers or the AACO Client Services Unit (CSU). She stated that the CSU employed many Spanish-speaking staff members. She noted that each agency had its own process for filing complaints and those who needed to make additional complaints could do so through the AACO CSU.

M. Coleman asked if individuals needing legal assistance could get help through Ryan White. E. Torres replied that they could. She said that Ryan White legal assistance covered benefits assistance and discrimination claims, but did not cover criminal cases.

- **Housing Overview (Gary Tumolo, OHCD)**

G. Tumolo stated that he'd write his email address on the board for anyone who had additional questions following his presentation². He said he worked for the Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD) and had formerly been employed as a case manager at ActionAIDS. A community member asked if he could write G. Tumolo an email in Spanish, and G. Tumolo replied that he could. G. Tumolo passed around a paper for participants to write their email addresses if they wanted to receive future updates about housing. He said he'd send more information to these individuals. E.C. noted that he had no email address. M. White stated that anyone could get an email address through FIGHT or the public library.

G. Tumolo reported that the current HOPWA wait time was 7 years, or 1 year for consumers who were homeless. He said that 340 individuals and households were on the waiting list for HOPWA. He noted that funding for the program had been cut and rents had risen in recent years. He added that utilities allowances had not been adjusted since 2001. He stated that the Section 8 waiting list was closed. J.M. stated that clients who received Section 8 also had to wait long periods to move into their new dwellings. G. Tumolo encouraged anyone who had problems moving into a new HOWPA unit to email him.

J.M. stated that many landlords did not participate in Section 8 housing. G. Tumolo concurred. He noted that landlords had to go through a difficult process to participate in Section 8. G. Tumolo said that it was easier for landlords to participate in HOPWA. C.S. stated that those with a mental health diagnosis who were HIV positive and homeless could participate in the KOMAR, Casa, and Compass programs. G. Tumolo stated that the KOMAR program had been transferred to the Mazzone Center. He reiterated that anyone who wanted additional information following the program could email him or call his office³. He encouraged attendees to get on the HOPWA waiting list but also pursue other options for housing. He stated that phfa.org was a website that provided information about housing resources. He said that housing was available for seniors and disabled individuals. He said affordable housing options were also available through programs listed on the website.

G. Tumolo stated that Project HOME had started building apartments that anyone could apply to. He said applicants did not have to be homeless. He stated that individuals who wanted to learn more

² gary.tumolo@phila.gov

³ 215-686-9741

about Project HOME could call them at 215-232-7272. He said Project HOME also had a homeless outreach number⁴.

G. Tumolo stated that HUD was changing the formula for how much funding an area received. He explained that the Philadelphia area was currently funded based on cumulative number of AIDS cases from the beginning of the epidemic. He said this was being switched to the total number of current HIV cases. He stated that the effect of the shift was still uncertain. He explained that decreased funding for housing and higher rent totals meant less housing was available, and turnover rates were lower. He added that deaths from AIDS were much more frequent when the HOPWA program was established, but were now rare, resulting in lower turnover rates. He noted that PHFA options (as listed on the website above) did not require individuals to be HIV-positive.

G. Tumolo asked C.S. if vegetarian meals were available through MANNA. C.S. replied that they were not. A separate community member noted that MANNA was undergoing transitions in their program at this time. M. Coleman asserted that a large number of LGBT youth were homeless, particular transgender individuals. G. Tumolo stated that he'd spoken with Planning Council colleagues about the need for housing for transgender people and youth. He said that they planned to follow up in the future about the issue. E. Torres emphasized that housing was limited in the city of Philadelphia. She stated that research indicated that 30,000 units would have to be built in Philadelphia to meet the affordable housing needs. She encouraged Latino individuals to check with APM about housing resources.

J.M. stated that many people lost their housing. He said the loss of housing was a major problem. He stated that housing regulations became more stringent when people lost their housing. K. Carter noted that some individuals were required to prove they paid their rent in order to receive transportation services. E. Torres commented that AACO did not require medical case managers to ask clients for rent receipts in order to receive non-housing services. She stated that these issues should be handled by housing counselors.

K. Carter asked if agencies had housing coordinators. G. Tumolo stated that housing counselors worked with individuals who received housing subsidies. K. Carter said participants in a CAB he was part of complained about overly stringent requirements that acted as a barrier to services. E. Torres noted that agencies had some leeway regarding their own regulations. G. Tumolo said he'd speak with providers about loosening stringent requirements.

G. Tumolo stated that DEFA was funded by Ryan White, as was HOPWA. He said HOPWA was funded for permanent housing placement rather than just short-term rental, utilities, mortgages. He said that HOPWA funding could be used for up to 2 months security in units that were not going to be subsidized. He said the program also funded utility turn on (though large back utilities bills were not paid). M. Coleman asked what kind of programs were funded for transitional housing. G. Tumolo stated that OHCD did not receive funding for transitional housing, which typically operated through OSH.

J.G. stated that he'd been on the Section 8 waiting list for 10 years. G. Tumolo explained that he had difficulty establishing contact with PHA to follow up on individual housing issues. E. Torres stated that the PHA periodically verified client addresses. She encouraged individuals on the waiting list to ensure their addresses were current. She said she could provide a phone number for making these

⁴ 215-232-1984

contacts. M. Coleman asked if HOPWA assistance was available in the PA counties. G. Tumolo noted that HOWPA no longer funded Bucks, Montgomery, or Chester County through the EMA.

G. Tumolo stated that the HIV Housing Advisory Committee would be meeting next Tuesday (September 22nd) at 2:00p.m. at the OHCD offices in the SEPTA building. He said the meeting was held at 1234 Market St. on the 17th floor. He noted that tokens and food were not provided for these meetings.

Old Business:

Co-Chair Nominations

D. Gana stated that his 2-year term as Positive Committee Co-Chair would end next month. He stated that Co-Chairs needed to be available for a 2-year commitment. He asked if there were any questions about Co-Chairs' responsibilities. Seeing none, he opened the floor for nominations.

Motion: G.T. nominated herself for the Co-Chair position, J.M. seconded. **Motion passed:** all in favor. **Motion:** M. Coleman nominated C.S. for the position, M. White seconded. **Motion passed:** all in favor. **Motion:** M. Coleman nominated J.M. for the position, and she declined the nomination. **Motion failed.**

N. Johns stated that nominees would be accepted leading up to the next meeting. **Motion:** R.J. nominated himself, J.M. seconded. **Motion passed:** all in favor.

Motion: J.G. nominated N.S. for the position. M. Coleman seconded. **Motion passed:** all in favor.

D. Gana asked all nominees to prepare a short speech to present at the Positive Committee next meeting on October 19th.

New Business: None.

Announcements: N. Johns stated that she'd be out of the office for several weeks from late September through October 8th. She stated that any questions during that time should be directed to the general office phone number.

D. Gana stated that October 11th was Outfest. He said there would be a Mr. Friendly booth at the event. He explained that Mr. Friendly was directed at breaking down the stigma of HIV through open non-judgmental conversations.

M. Coleman asked when the next HPG meeting would be held. D. Gana stated that the HPG had been rescheduled for September 30th, which was listed incorrectly on the calendar.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by general consensus at 1:50p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Jennifer Hayes, Staff

Handouts distributed at the meeting:

- Meeting Agenda

- August 10, 2015 Meeting Minutes
- OHP Calendar

1. I live in zipcode: _____

2. My HIV medical care provider is located in (name neighborhood, town or zipcode):

3. I get to my HIV medical provider by:

Walking

Riding a bike

Driving my car

Public Transportation

Getting a ride from a friend or family member

Medicaid or Medicare transportation (Logisticare, MATP)

Ride from my provider

Taxi

Other: _____

4. Do you have any challenges with transportation to your HIV medical care? If so, please describe.

5. Have you missed appointments because you did not have a way to get to the doctor?

Yes No

6. Does anyone help you get transportation to your HIV medical appointments? If so, who?

7. Is there anything else you would like to share about transportation to medical appointments?

