

**Program Description:**

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)/Illinois HIV Integrated Planning Council (IHIPC) Engagement Plan identifies strategies for building relationships and strengthening the collaboration between governmental entities and community partners across the state to enhance the effectiveness of HIV care, treatment, and prevention programs and ultimately, to achieve the following goals:

Goals of the Getting to Zero Illinois (GTZ-IL) Plan:

- Zero new HIV infections
- Zero people living with HIV not on antiretroviral therapy

Goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS):

- Reduce new HIV infections.
- Increase access to care and improve health outcomes for people living with HIV.
- Reduce HIV-related health disparities.
- Provide a coordinated national response to HIV.

The engagement plan recommends identifying, recruiting, and bringing together people living with HIV (PLWH), community stakeholders, and service providers through a collaborative planning process to review and assess issues, gaps, and barriers to the delivery and utilization of effective HIV care, treatment, and prevention services and to provide input and recommendations on developing strategies aimed at achieving the GTZ-IL and NHAS goals.

**Program Goals:**

The overarching goal of the engagement plan is to:

**Achieve a more coordinated response to HIV by engaging key community stakeholders and leaders and increasing collaboration and coordination among HIV programs.**

This goal aligns with the fourth goal of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy.

**Five strategies have been identified to achieve these goals and include:**

**Strategy 1:** Increase community stakeholders’ awareness and understanding of HIV care, treatment, and prevention programs.

**Strategy 2:** Identify opportunities for collaboration and coordination across all HIV programs - statewide and local.

**Strategy 3:** Increase access and linkage to HIV care, treatment, and prevention services.

**Strategy 4:** Eliminate stigma and discrimination in HIV care, treatment, and prevention.

**Strategy 5:** Increase stakeholder knowledge of the populations by risk, race, ethnicity, and region that comprise the most disproportionate proportion of new HIV diagnoses, late diagnoses, and PLWH who are not engaged in HIV care and/or are not virally suppressed.

**Key Stakeholders:**

Key stakeholders who will be engaged in the HIV planning process will include but are not limited to:

- Networks of HIV positive people and their sex and/or needle sharing partners;
- Networks of and organizations serving LGBTQ+ communities;
- Networks of and organizations serving high HIV incidence communities, in particular young MSM and transgender persons of color, and the highest risk heterosexual subpopulations including HIV sero-discordant couples;
- Networks of and organizations serving injection drug users including current and recovering injection drug users, harm reduction staff, methadone clinic staff, recovery homes;
- Networks of marginalized groups (substance users, sex workers, current/former incarcerated/detained persons (or partners thereof));
- Networks of groups with language and cultural barriers including migrants and immigrants from high HIV incidence countries;
- HIV positive pregnant women or mothers and providers working to prevent perinatal HIV transmission;
- HIV prevention, care, and treatment *planners*, including governmental/non-governmental agencies and other planning groups;
- HIV prevention, care, and treatment *providers*, including mental health program leaders;
- STD clinics, hepatitis prevention program, and disease intervention programs;
- Community and youth leaders; women’s health/reproductive health/transgender health advocates and program leaders;
- Governmental/non-governmental program leaders implementing social justice reform;
- Affordable and specialized housing advocates, policy makers, and program leaders.

**Engagement and Retention Strategies:**

Each year the Integrated Planning Program seeks to engage over 100 community stakeholders in planning group meetings and activities. This is in addition to the IHIPC members and IDPH staff who regularly participate in planning group functions. The Integrated Planning Program and the IHIPC annually develop specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-measured objectives and identify key strategies/activities to engage new and previous partners, maintain current partner relationships, and retain those partners in coordinated, collaborative planning processes for HIV prevention, care, and treatment.

The IDPH HIV Integrated Community Planning Program sets up and maintains two-way communication with all identified key stakeholders and participants in engagement activities as well as maintain a record of documents, reports, and notes developed throughout all engagement activities. This documentation record will not only provide key stakeholders with easy access to information for program coordination and decision-making but will uphold the continuity of the process should staff roles change. The documentation will also enhance retention of new and previous partners through the sharing of information and the transparency of the engagement process.

**Guiding Principles for Engagement will be based on the following factors:**

- Mutual respect and understanding
- Engagement and participation will be beneficial and of interest to all
- Communication will be open and involve balanced and objective information-sharing and discussion as well as solicitation of feedback that will promote understanding of the issues, coordination across programs, and informed decision-making

*The Illinois Integrated Plan for HIV Care and Prevention: 2017-2021 Activities Chart* was last updated in December 2019. In conjunction with 2020 strategic objectives that have been established for all IHIPC committees and workgroups, these documents collectively serve as an operation plan to implement engagement plan activities in 2020. Utilizing evaluation indicators and metrics that have been identified for each objective or activity, the IDPH HIV Integrated Community Planning Program will regularly monitor progress. A feedback loop has been established to ensure stakeholders who participate in the engagement plan activities are provided with follow up information, reports and documents.