

Prince George's Healthcare Action Coalition HIV and STI's Work Group



Meets once each month at 1701 McCormick Drive, Largo, Maryland.

Co-Chairs are Dedra Spears-Johnson (Executive Director, Heart to Hand, Inc.) and Dr. Joseph Richardson, Jr., PhD (Associate Professor of African American Studies, University of Maryland)

The HIV and STI's Work Group operates under Priority 4 of the Local Health Action Plan for 2011-2014 in Prince George's County, to *"prevent and control infectious disease in Prince George's County, particularly among African Americans and other minorities."* As such, the Work Group has selected the following County Outcome Objective to work towards achieving each year:

- (1) Reduce new HIV infections among adults and adolescents by five percent (5%)

The work group's primary strategies for 2014 from the Local Health Action Plan, 2011-2014 are to:

- *"increase routine HIV screening in clinical settings and targeted screening in non-clinical settings, including the Prince George's County Department of Corrections, public substance abuse treatment programs and the school based wellness clinics (all located in areas with the highest morbidity rates); link HIV positives immediately to care and high risk HIV negatives to other medical care and HIV prevention programs,"*
- *"increase awareness among medical providers of the HIV medical care and support services available to HIV infected residents, and encourage providers to make HIV testing a routine part of care,"* and
- *"train the medical community to be more comfortable and proficient in discussing substance use, sexual history and sexual habits with their patients, and in addressing cultural and linguistic barriers to their care."*

The HIV and STI's Work Group's 2014 goals are:

- (1) Achieve consistent legislation on HIV testing and consent across all county hospitals
- (2) Increase awareness of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Maryland testing recommendations
- (3) Increase routine testing in public and private sectors

This year, the group is focused on changing the behavior of healthcare providers in order to catch the HIV disease early in patients and to connect patients to sustained treatment as quickly and efficiently as possible. The work group already has researched best practices for routine HIV testing and connection to care in Baltimore City Hospitals and presented the findings to the Healthcare Action Coalition. This information will also be presented at the May 2014 meeting of Maryland State Medical Society (MedChi), followed by a doctors' survey on HIV routine testing practices in collaboration with the Access to Care Work Group's electronic survey to doctors. In addition, the HIV and STI's Work Group is planning a doctors' meeting in June 2014 where peer training and materials on avoiding cultural barriers (stigma) and finding payment coverage for HIV testing in order to expand HIV testing practices in the county will be offered to attendees.

Finally, the Work Group is in the process of drafting a legislative proposal to better facilitate patient consent and routine testing in Prince George's County hospitals. The draft will be based on the current practices and policies regarding this matter in the county, as well as best practices found in other parts of the state and region for increasing HIV testing and improving access to care.

Next year, the Work Group plans to add a new goal of improving access to care for PLWH based on the District of Columbia Red Carpet model.