

Community Engagement Task Group Recommendation Report

Task Group Objectives and Process

This group initially convened to organize events and activities that would introduce Toronto to Zero to community members and provide opportunities for their involvement in the project. Following our first community engagement activities in the fall of 2018, we identified an opportunity for Toronto to Zero to promote more active involvement of community members in local HIV services and programs as part of this initiative. The Community Engagement Task Group then held five meetings between January and August of 2019 to:

- Identify challenges that prevent specific communities of people living with and affected by HIV from being able to participate in activities within Toronto's response to HIV;
- Recommend strategies for Toronto to Zero to actively engage community members living with and affected by HIV as full participants in Toronto's response to HIV, including creating more engagement opportunities for community members who are less likely to be represented currently;
- Deliver a report to the Champion team that identifies this group's membership, key discussions about these issues, and a list of key recommendations to incorporate into Toronto to Zero's Action Plan.

Task Group Membership

Co-chairs:

- Darien Taylor, Community Member
- Murray Jose-Boerbridge, Toronto HIV/AIDS Network

Members:

- Andre Ceranto, Casey House
- Chris Leonard, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
- Gareth Henry, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention
- Jack Mohr, Ontario HIV Treatment Network
- John McCullagh, Community Member
- Paulson Amibor, Toronto Public Health
- Ryan Kerr, Ontario HIV Treatment Network
- Suzanne Paddock, Toronto People with AIDS Foundation



Recommendation #1

To engage individuals and communities in dialogue and mutual understanding across generations, both to foster knowledge of the history of Toronto's HIV movement and to inform how we move forward.

TTZ Objectives for this recommendation

1. Improve overall health, longevity and quality of life of people living with HIV
2. Reduce new HIV transmissions
3. Surpass 90-90-90 targets
4. End all HIV-related stigma and discrimination
5. Ensure all populations most affected by HIV share in the benefits of care and treatment

Recommendation outline

Throughout the 35 years of the epidemic, Toronto has always had a strong and definitive response to HIV, characterized by self-help initiatives, the establishment of support structures, and an emphasis on health education, advocacy and political action. Everyone in the city who is living with or affected by HIV has benefited from these initiatives. Yet, for many young people today HIV can look very different, and be experienced differently, than by an older generation whose initial experience of the virus may have predated the introduction of effective antiretroviral treatment. The need of people to engage with the movement today can also be experienced differently than during the height of the epidemic. It is, however, important that we engage individuals and communities in intergenerational dialogue, not only because remembering the history of our movement will inform how we move forward but also because it facilitates dialogue and mutual understanding across generations. Accordingly, we recommend that:

1. Young people who are newly diagnosed or who are at systemic risk for HIV, along with those who are new staff or volunteers in the sector, are provided with opportunities for learning about the history of the HIV movement, how we built it and how we have dealt with challenges. To this end, existing historical resources can be built upon. Examples include AIDS Action Now!, AIDS Activist History Project (aidsactivisthistory.ca), Project Remember, the LGBT Archives, and the Ontario AIDS Network.
2. We partner with other organizations to utilize existing and develop new training and learning resources related to HIV history and intergenerational dialogue. Examples include HIV Resources Ontario, InvestiGAYtors, Our Space, Let's Stop AIDS, CANFAR Young Ambassadors, Totally Outright, Senior Pride Network, and comparable programs run by community-based organizations. This will provide an opportunity to develop and mentor new leadership.
3. We engage in regular social media outreach activities and schedule community events with the objective of building community knowledge and fostering intergenerational dialogue, and dialogue between communities affected by HIV.

Key populations affected

All key populations and all generations



Recommendation #2

Embedded within a demonstrated deep commitment to GIPA/MEPA, meaningful peer engagement, programming and roles will be expanded in Toronto, particularly within TtZ partnerships, interventions and activities.

TtZ objectives for this recommendation

While this recommendation can intersect with all of the TtZ objectives, it relates most closely with:

1. Link and Retain People Living with HIV in Care
2. Improve the Health and Well-being of People Living with HIV

Recommendation outline

Complementing deep anecdotal evidence, there is an increasing body of empirical evidence that demonstrates the value, importance and effectiveness of peer engagement, programming and roles, related both to reaching and supporting those most at risk as well as those living with HIV. Peers have a unique ability to connect in meaningful ways and to facilitate client engagement in care and support. This is particularly important when considering equity across populations, with a specific focus on those most affected by HIV and those who face extensive barriers to health and wellness.

Also, of critical importance is the impact for peers who often engage in these roles as part of their personal development, health and wellness efforts.

Both peers and clients experience an increased sense of control, empowerment and connection to community as well as improved mental health. Additionally, peers and clients contribute to addressing stigma and to organizational programs which are more responsive, flexible and accountable.

Effective implementation of this recommendation also ensures that people living with HIV are at the heart of Toronto to Zero goals, particularly to link and retain people with HIV in care.

Effective implementation of this recommendation must:

1. be built into organizational structures, norms, culture and accountability systems;
2. include required best practices for peer programming such as appropriate compensation, training and support;
3. demonstrate and maintain strategic grounding within Toronto to Zero recommendations and actions, particularly related to linkage and retention to care;
4. include peer navigation roles and programs which can support emotional health, medication adherence and its relationship to safer sex and HIV transmission, starting treatment, disclosure strategies and social determinants of health;
5. allow for client-driven flexibility and movement between roles and programs;
6. create strategic and concrete connections to existing relevant programs (e.g. PLDI, CAAT, TTOA, OODP, successful CHC harm reduction programs, Terrence Higgins Trust programs and evaluation);



7. be strategically and intentionally supported through a regional peer programming committee (potentially coordinated as part of Toronto HIV/AIDS Network activities) which will provide insight, leadership and accountability to manifest the intent and impact of these recommendations;
8. be developed and recognized across the sector towards building new leaders and as valid experience towards employment efforts;
9. include support to effectively evaluate.

Key stakeholders who will be implicated in implementing the recommended program or policy changes

1. Positive Leadership Development Institute (PLDI) – capacity building and leadership training
2. Turning to One Another Network (TTOA) – training, resources and network member support for peer programming
3. Ontario Organizational Development Program (OODP) – workshops including GIPA/MEPA and Boundaries focused on organizational capacity and accountability
4. Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) -
5. Current and emerging knowledge experts in peer programming including:
 - Toronto People With AIDS Foundation (including Circle of Care peer program)
 - Fife House
 - Committee for Accessible AIDS Treatment (CAAT)
 - Casey House
 - PASAN

The key populations that will be affected by the recommended change

People living with HIV

Recommendation #3

Create opportunities for meaningful and intentional reconnection with community groups and social movements that can strengthen the HIV response.

TTZ Objectives for this recommendation

1. Improve overall health, longevity and quality of life of people living with HIV

Recommendation Outline

The initial response to HIV drew from different social movements as community members and service providers sought to address the crisis affecting their communities. While maintaining a deep commitment to social justice and grassroots principles, the HIV response evolved into a more insular, structured and strategic response providing organizations with a specific focus on the needs of people living with HIV.

Individual people and organizations have maintained connections outside of the HIV field, but the HIV sector as a whole would benefit from revitalizing connection with other service providers and social movements to generate new strategies and partnerships to address the complex, intersectional needs of people living with HIV.

This work would also strengthen our collective advocacy impact by working with other organizations to try and achieve system changes and creating a more unified voice for the HIV sector around key issues impacting people living with HIV. Effective implementation of this recommendation includes:

1. Coordinating a forum or think tank style event structured as a mapping exercise and specifically designed to identify:
 - a. current needs of people living with HIV that could be addressed through better collaboration outside the HIV sector,
 - b. historic and current community partners, service providers and social movements which might have a role in addressing the identified needs,
 - c. organizations and individuals that have existing connections to other sectors or social movements addressing the identified needs,
 - d. opportunities and action to utilize the knowledge gained from the mapping exercise to meaningfully and intentionally reconnect, build strong and strategic partnerships that will strengthen the HIV response
2. Utilizing the Toronto HIV/AIDS Network and the Ontario HIV Treatment Network as backbone support organizations that can support and incorporate this work into their learning and engagement activities. The Ontario AIDS Network, as an organization with a history of community engagement