

VOICES

THE VOICE OF DELAWARE'S HIV COMMUNITY

DELAWARE HIV CONSORTIUM

Spring 2020

From Our Executive Director – trying times, we're here for you

Tyler Berl



While these are truly unprecedented times, I am buoyed by our HIV/AIDS community. We have experienced the rise of an unknown virus, unforgivingly taking the lives of promising and otherwise healthy members of society. We have fought, and continue to fight the stigma from a society that sees those who have acquired the virus as less than, or dirty. We have pushed for adequate testing and a drug regimen to quell the transmission of the virus. Now, more than ever, the world is looking at our community for a model of success.

I am proud to take the helm of the Delaware HIV Consortium at such a difficult and trying time; and, I am thankful that the agency's Board of Trustees, the staff and the wider HIV/AIDS community have entrusted me with the responsibility of steering one of Delaware's great HIV service providers to our next future.

Now, more than ever, we promise you to elevate the needs of our clients, and to work to reduce those barriers that impede our clients' health and well-being. Over the past three weeks, I have been moved and humbled to see our case managers spend hours on the phones with individual clients to ensure that they do not feel isolated during this isolating time; I have witnessed our housing and finance staff work tirelessly to help those we serve remain in their homes and keep the lights on.

Yet, as we know from the history of our epidemic, brighter days are on the horizon. This new reality won't last forever. And so, we are also keeping our eye on our ultimate goal – that one day we will end the HIV epidemic in Delaware. So, as I start my tenure as the Executive Director of the Delaware HIV Consortium I will make you all this promise – this agency will continue to do what it has always done, we will be there to fill the gaps in our system that are preventing the ultimate end of our epidemic. We will work hard to elevate the voices of our community, and we partner will other like-minded sectors to holistically and equitably serve our communities.

As the agency's executive director, Peter Houle, steps down, Delaware's HIV/AIDS sector is losing a pillar of our community. I, and our agency, will work to do the one thing that will honor him the most – and that is to step forward and serve.

Thank you for your continued support,
Tyler Berl, MA

The COVID-19 Crisis: Our continued commitment to our clients

By Kristine Major, CM Supervisor



Due to the restrictions related to COVID-19, and in consideration of the high-risk population that we serve, the Consortium's HIV Case Management department has begun serving our clients remotely. This means that the majority of the work that we do to serve our clients every day will be done through e-mail, text message, and phone contact.

So far, we have not encountered client issues that cannot be resolved remotely. Thankfully, our clients are also putting their health first and following Governor Carney's directive to remain socially distant. The Case Management team has found that many of our clients are handling social distancing well, but do need some additional social support, as we all do, during this time. For this reason, we are currently reaching out to clients by phone at an increased rate based on each client needs.

Case Managers continue to recertify clients for the Ryan White program in accordance with guidelines issued by the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH). For those clients that Case Managers are having difficulty getting documentation from, DPH is allowing Case Managers to extend Ryan White coverage for two months in order to ensure that our clients remain active in the program and able to obtain their medications with no copays.

In addition, Case Management continues to complete new client intakes through me, Kristine Major, Case Management supervisor. Should anyone throughout the state need to engage in case management services, please call me at **302-288-0358** and leave a message to be returned in 24 hours or less. Intakes are being completed over the phone at this time.

In addition to providing our everyday services, the Case Management team has been educating our clients on COVID-19 and how it has affect our community and our clients as individuals. Working together, we will get through this crisis, and will look back at this time with pride, knowing that we continued to serve our clients without sacrifice.

Public Notice RW Hearing

The Delaware Ryan White Public Hearing will be held on April 7, 2020, at 12:00 PM Noon, using ZOOM. You can attend my clicking the link below and entering the meeting ID number.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/829104931>

Meeting ID: 829 104 931

New Resource Guides

The 2020-22 Resource Guide is now available. Bulk delivery to partner agencies can be arranged by sending an email to info@delawarehiv.org. Delivery will be arranged after the State of Emergency is canceled. In the meanwhile, the new directory is available in PDF format at www.delawarehiv.org, which allows you to print the whole directory or just the pages you want.

Welcome Sarah!



The Consortium is pleased to welcome Sarah Parsley, HIV case manager, to our team! Sarah is based at our office in Milford, Delaware, and comes to us with a wealth of experience in case management. Welcome, Sarah!

About the 2020 WOW Awards...



The 2020 WOW Awards Gala, originally scheduled for April 24, has been postponed because of the State of Emergency. *We will be announcing the new date soon!* We thank the sponsors and individuals who have sponsored tables to date and hope that you will continue to support WOW – the Consortium's largest annual fundraiser.

Housing News

By Audrey Nwokocha, Housing Supervisor

The Delaware Housing Assistance Program has taken precautionary steps to ensure a continuous rental assistance and support to our program beneficiaries during the COVID – 19 pandemic.

Due to the 'Stay at Home' order by the Governor, we have been operating from home and maintaining daily communication with clients, landlords, utility providers, social workers and others in helping our clients maintain stable housing.

Annual re-certifications are being completed over the phone to honor contractual obligations and client compliance with the program. Our staff are using many mediums including email, phone and fax to communicate with all in the community who are involved in guiding our clients toward stable housing. Clients have access to our DHAP cell phone and can phone and communicate with us directly with impending needs.

We are able to access the DHAP voicemail system from home and have been following up with missed calls daily. Annual housing inspections, re-inspections, pre-rental inspections have all been postponed until further notice and notifications have been sent to Landlords as per policy guidelines.



PrEP Navigation Program Launched

The Delaware HIV Consortium is pleased to announce its new PrEP Navigation program. Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a once a day pill that helps prevent HIV infection. This pilot program for PrEP Navigation is a collaboration of the Delaware Division of Public Health, the Delaware HIV Consortium, and Planned Parenthood of Delaware, and is designed to help at-risk Delawareans to gain access to PrEP for the prevention of HIV infection. Thanks to two generous grants, the Consortium's PrEP Navigation program will provide funding to help patients overcome the cost of required lab work.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, plans to have a Consortium staffer who will be embedded at Planned Parenthood (PPDE) on Shipley Street in Wilmington have been suspended, however, Navigation is still available by calling the Consortium or by signing up for Navigation at www.delawarehiv.org.

The first step is connecting the client to a prescribing professional. Once the patient has a referral for PrEP from a primary care provider, along with a physician's order for pre-prescribing lab work, the navigator will assist the patient in accessing both medication and diagnostic laboratory tests that are required before prescribing PrEP.

Accessing PrEP

A major barrier to accessing PrEP is the cost of diagnostic lab work that must be completed before the patient receives a prescription for PrEP. Currently, all health plans cover the medication, but some plans have a deductible or co-pay for labs. If the patient's deductible hasn't been met, it could cost \$400-\$800 out of pocket for lab work. Thanks to a generous grant from the Laffey-McHugh Foundation and the WAWA Foundation, the Consortium will be helping cover the costs of diagnostic

work for those enrolled in our PrEP Navigation program. This grant funded program will be able to assist approximately 300 patients, but when the funds are exhausted the assistance will end.

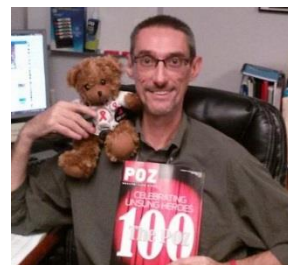
The navigator will also help patients enroll in a patient medication assistance program, which provides up to \$7,200 assistance per year – enough to cover out of pocket costs for the first three months until deductibles are satisfied.

The PrEP Navigation program will also help patients steer through some questions they may have about insurance. For example, Medicaid and Medicare both cover PrEP and diagnostic work that is required. For those who may qualify for Medicaid, but are not enrolled, the navigator will assist in enrolling.

For more information about our PrEP Navigation program, go to www.delawarehiv.org. At the site, you will find many useful tools including prescribing information for providers, a list of PrEP prescribers in Delaware, a toolkit for patients who think they might want to take one pill daily to prevent HIV.

To join the PrEP Navigation program, call the Delaware HIV Consortium at 302-654-5471, or sign up at www.delawarehiv.org.

In Memory of Joe Scarborough



The Consortium is saddened by the passing of Joe Scarborough on February 12. Joe was a former employee, volunteer, tester extraordinaire, community planning dynamo, advocate and friend. Those who knew Joe will never forget him. Rest in power, Joey.

Farewell from Peter Houle



*Peter (I) and his
husband, Mark.
Cheers!*

What a bittersweet note I am writing today. With such mixed emotions of joy, fear, contemplation, excitement and pride, I can't begin to put seventeen years of experiences and memories into a report. I do know that my tenure with the Delaware HIV Consortium has been a highlight of my career and I can only hope that I have left an indelible footprint in the history of this amazing organization.

It has been a privilege and an honor to call you all my colleagues and to have worked with you to improve the lives of the HIV community in Delaware. Despite the ups and downs, the many challenges and our many incredible accomplishments ... we faced them together

and together we resolved them, developed them and always came out on top because we did the right thing...we kept true to our mission and always put our clients first!

We never chased the money trail but rather methodically and purposely led the way in developing new programs, taking on the challenges no one else wanted and as a result, the Consortium became the true HIV leader in the state because we were always proactive rather than reactive.

Together, what this organization has accomplished in the past two decades is nothing but astounding and to think.... WOW...we've only just begun. I have no doubt the Consortium will continue to thrive, grow, flourish and develop under new leadership and a renewed vision of greatness because the foundation has been laid and the organization is fiscally sound.

With that, I bid you all a fond farewell and a future full of hope, prosperity and making sure that every infected and affected HIV individual in Delaware finds the home that I found for the past seventeen years. God Bless!

Your Friend Forever,

Peter