



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

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Division of Public Health

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Since 1984, the North Carolina Division of Public Health, local health departments, AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), medical practitioners and many others have been committed to improving access to quality care and health outcomes for people living with HIV.

Within the last year, The Communicable Disease Branch (CDB), HIV Prevention and Care staff, and the North Carolina AIDS Action Network (NCAAN) have held specific meetings and conversations with community partners on various strategies to improve our response to HIV and to plan for our future success. As part of our continued commitment to HIV treatment and prevention, the CDB and NCAAN are excited to announce that we are combining efforts to facilitate a robust community driven dialogue to shape and inform North Carolina's statewide strategies to end the HIV epidemic over the course of 2019. We'll gather information through in person events across the state and digital outreach that will inform and direct our state's work to end the HIV epidemic.

In 2017, approximately 40,000 persons were living with HIV (PLWH) in North Carolina. It is estimated that 5,000 (12%) of PLWH are unaware of their status. Of those PLWH in North Carolina, at least 59% are virally suppressed. Among people served by Ryan White HIV programs or HIV medication assistance program (HMAP), 86% of clients are virally suppressed. Rapid linkage and retention in care is essential to achieving viral suppression, and once durably virally suppressed, persons living with HIV cannot transmit the virus. Additionally, HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), when taken as directed by a medical provider, reduces the risk of acquiring HIV by more than 90%.

We are now at an important time where we have the experience, tools, systems, partnerships and energy to provide the comprehensive services necessary to successfully address the HIV, STD, and viral hepatitis syndemic and end the HIV epidemic. A critical step to ending the HIV epidemic is supporting PLWH in accessing the medical services needed to remain engaged in HIV care and referring persons vulnerable to HIV to proven prevention tools, like PrEP.

While significant progress has been made, barriers still exist and plans to end the HIV epidemic must acknowledge and continually strive to develop effective mechanisms to overcome these barriers. To that end, both the CDB and NCAAN strongly feel that strategies developed and

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deployed to end HIV must include broad participation of PLWH, those vulnerable to HIV and other STDs, as well as committed providers and community members. To assist in organizing this effort, we will be working with a diverse statewide steering committee comprising representatives from the communities most impacted by the HIV epidemic across the state. With your commitment, this committee will help to shape the path to ending HIV in North Carolina and support regional activities to engage stakeholders and foster the collaboration of resources in this effort.

If you are interested in serving on the steering committee, or being involved in the process in other ways, please fill out this [form](https://tinyurl.com/StateVoices) (<https://tinyurl.com/StateVoices>). The form will provide a chance for you to share how you can best bring your passion and talents to this important process, and applications will be reviewed periodically over the course of the process. Though review will be ongoing, if you are interested in being involved from day one or serving on the steering committee, please complete the form by March 18th, 2019.

In addition to the steering committee, there will be opportunities to contribute to statewide initiatives through regional meetings and other forums. Your help is needed to shape North Carolina's path to ending the HIV epidemic. Your voice, thoughts and presence matter. Together we can shape our future to assure a healthier North Carolina for every person and every community.



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