**Attendees List:**

1. Kyla Loucks – ATC @ Albany Medical Center
2. Vanessa Gonzalez – In Our Own Voices
3. Ifeachor Potts – Alliance for Positive Health
4. Brynn Watkins – Schenectady County Public Health
5. J Haller – Ellis Medicine
6. Ashley Smith – ATC @ Albany Medical Center
7. Jill Broderick – Whitney Young
8. Michelle Varvaro – CHHUNY: Children’s Health Home of Upstate NY
9. Diane DeGroat – Senior Attorney, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY
10. Meghan Thompson – Retention Adherence Specialist, Ellis Medicine
11. Grace Fay – HIAP Enrollment Specialist, Alliance for Positive Health
12. Lauren Quinn – Albany Med Specialized Care Center for Adolescents and Young Adults
13. Akeem Tyrell – Albany Damien Center, Employment Pathways
14. Alexander DeSacia, ATC @ Albany Medical Center, PrEP
15. Amy Palma – Unity House of Troy

**Call to Order** – Co-chair Kyla Loucks welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

1. Welcome & Introductions – Kyla Loucks & Vanessa Gonzalez, Committee Chairs
2. Minutes Review

**Motion to approve the minutes from the 4/19/2022 meeting. Motion made by Grace Fey; Al DeSacia seconded the motion. All were in favor, and no one abstained from or opposed the motion.**

1. Legislative Updates – Perry Junjulas
2. There are only about 8 days left to the legislative session. There has been no new movement on any of our initiatives.
3. S.8509A (Cleare)/A.9693(Rosenthal) is a bill to repeal the Medicaid Carve-out that we are supporting
4. Next ETE Legislative Meeting will be Thurs, May 19, where we will discuss how to advance many of the attached budget and policy items that were not addressed this year. Please reach out to Seth Pollack [s.pollack@housingworks.org](mailto:s.pollack@housingworks.org) at or myself at [PerryJ@AlbanyDamienCente.org](mailto:PerryJ@AlbanyDamienCente.org) to receive the link for the bi-weekly legislative workgroup meetings.
5. Please take some time to read the ETE Budget and Policy Platform document.
6. Agency Updates

Lauren Quinn – Albany Med Specialized Care Center for Adolescents and Young Adults update.   
Busy next few months with outreach and a teaching day on June 14th. Will send all info out to this listserv. Pride is coming up. Running the youth ETE meetings still; and want to keep it going, so discussing where to go from here.

Ifeachor Potts – Alliance for Positive Health update.  
Launched the Testing campaign to combat syphilis, to get people in to get a rapid syphilis test. We’ll be at Pride events. Preparing for national HIV testing day. Also, at Albany and Schenectady sites. Van season tour; we will be at all 15 counties we represent. We also have walk-in testing and it’s available up to 7:00 p.m.

Grace Fey – Still taking and meeting clients in person. NY State of Health is still accepting enrollments. The rollovers have been extended through next year. Open for doing presentation and outreach to anyone who’d like to have us present. We’ll be at Pride events. The outer counties also have Pride events.

Diane DeGroat – Legal Aid update.

Intake is open for folks living with HIV; call Diane. Looking at whether we’ll have a temporary attorney in place, while I am out on maternity leave. Continue to call for benefits counseling and benefits law. Doing housing work. Emergency rental assistance program is still open for applications; ERAP goes 12 months and can go up to 15 months of arrears. The applications that were submitted in March and April are being reviewed. Working on hiring to fill open spots.

Amy Palma – Unity House of Troy update.  
Fundraiser on May 26th to benefit our UH HIV supported housing programs. It’ll be at the River Street market at 6:00pm. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Unity House. Next month on June 30th we have a farewell to our CEO Chris Burke. Retiring after many years. All our housing programs are full, but have openings in our medical transportation program – for folks living with HIV.

Alexander DeSacia – Albany Med PrEP program update.   
Outreach coming out for June. Have not gotten a lot of intakes but hoping that will change as more outreach continues.

Ashley Smith – Albany Med update.   
Averaging 3-4 new intakes for people newly diagnosed with HIV per month. Doing 15-19 intakes per month. Excited to hear about all of the outreach. Helping folks get into PrEP programs. There is a lot of need out there and doing a lot to get folks into the programs they need.

Kyla - Albany Med update.   
HIV testing and counseling available M-F 7:30am to 4PM on a walk-in basis at 1 Clara Barton Drive. Doing bi-weekly testing on Thursdays at the Pride Center of the capital Region. Testing is free and walk-in from 2:30-5:30, before Yoga. Free testing at the Albany public libraries. First Wednesdays of the month from 2:30pm until the library closes at 7:00.

Akeem – Albany Damien Center update.   
A lot of staff changes. New Program Manager, Liam Staley. Systems manager is Crystal Cox. Also got a new housing advocate and a new staff accountant. Starting employment groups tomorrow.

For intakes, contact Akeem; he does intake for Damien Center and Employment Pathways. For employment pathways, we do the entire process and have weekly 1:1 meetings with Akeem. They apply for jobs and also work on what to respect and how to deal with conflicts. We also help folks keep jobs. If anyone is interested, Akeem has a flyer, that will be emailed to the group.

Michelle Varvaro – CHHUNY update.   
Oversees various agencies of the 15 counties. Children and youth 0-21 are eligible to have someone help them with many of our resources. Anyone with Medicaid is eligible for our services. Please reach out to Michelle with any questions. [mvarvaro@childrenshealthhome.org](mailto:mvarvaro@childrenshealthhome.org). we have 12 agencies within our home health org that can help folks. Our next meeting is June 14th between 3-6 p.m. in person. It will be a networking event. Michelle can share a flyer with everyone.

Kyla – Excited about Pride coming up, let us know about any events you may need support with. Celebrate safely!

1. Stigma & HIV Campaign Theme/Messaging
   1. Overall message idea development continues:

Ashley spoke on how her and Steve Sawicki created the idea of the HIV testing NY Links project because normalizing testing is what will help reduce stigma.

Kyla likes the idea of normalizing testing as the focus for the campaign messaging. They will be working with Steve on the HIV testing project, let them know if you are interested in joining.

Grace – Our agency did a contest on pronouns – the results will come out in June. What we chose had simple messaging. We know it’s a stigma campaign but we don’t have to say it’s a stigma campaign. Maybe it’s just knowing your status is routine. Where It’s for you, for me, for our partners, for our community. Let’s keep it as simple as possible.

Ashley and Ifeachor agree that a focus on normalizing HIV testing and making it routine is important.

* 1. Next steps:

Kyla – I can make up a survey monkey and put versions of ideas down. We can vote on what we like best. Picking a direction and creating concrete attainable goals is the most important right now.

Kyla has requested that attendees each send them an email before the next meeting with one simple idea for a tagline or messaging. Then we can move forward and pick something. Language could include:

* The focus of self-empowerment is great. Self-care and self-empowerment through knowing your status. The motivation is taking care of yourself and knowing your status.
* Status neutral approach
* The more testing we do, the more folks know their status, the more empowered they will be about their health. Knowledge will reduce stigma.

Thoughts, comments on moving in the direction of testing and what’s the power of knowing your status. If anyone has any other thoughts on the Campaign, let Kyla know.

1. Closing comments

If anyone has any Pride events that they’re attending or need assistance with, let Kyla know and they will send out to the group.

Thanks to all who joined us today!

Meeting adjourned at 9:58 am early to allow folks time to read the ETE NYS Budget and Policy Priorities.

**ETE Capital Region Meetings are from 9 AM to 10:30 AM on the 3rd Tues of each month**

Next ETE Meeting is Tuesday, June 21, 2022

**Co-Chair Contact information**

Vanessa Gonzalez [vgonzalez@inourownvoices.org](mailto:vgonzalez@inourownvoices.org) 518-432-4188 (phone), 518-491-1554 (work cell)

Kyla Loucks [loucksk1@amc.edu](mailto:loucksk1@amc.edu) 518-264-5839 (work phone)

ETE Webpage at <http://www.albanydamiencenter.org/capital-region-ete.html>