

**Louisiana Commission on HIV, AIDS, and Hepatitis C Education,  
Prevention, and Treatment**

**February 5, 2020  
10:00 am – 12:00 pm  
State Capitol, Committee Room 5  
Baton Rouge, LA**

**Commission Members Present:**

Alex Billioux, Alleen King-Carter, Andrea LaPlante, Angie Brown, Anthony Basco, Baylor Boyd, Bruce Parker, Damian Bellon, Davondra Brown (present on behalf of Marcus Bachhuber), David Mushatt (present on behalf of Lee Hamm), DeAnn Gruber, Flip Roberts (present on behalf of Paul Salles), Fran Lawless, John Morrison (present on behalf of James LeBlanc), Jaqueline Porter, Meta Smith-Davis, Mitchell Handrich, Norma Porter, Tamachia McCaa, Tamara Boutte, and Tavell Kindall

**I. Call to Order**

Dr. DeAnn Gruber called the commission meeting to order.

**II. Roll Call**

Dr. Gruber took a roll call of commission members and their designees.

**III. Old Business: December Minutes**

Commission members reviewed the minutes from the December 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

T. Kindall moved that the minutes be accepted. B. Boyd seconded. The motion passed.

**IV. Old Business: Ending the Epidemic (EHE) Activities Recap**

Dr. Gruber stated that following last meeting's presentation about Ending the Epidemic (EHE) activities, members were interested in receiving an update, including data collected that reflects implementation and persons served. However, since these activities have recently begun, she and Angie Brown (co-chair) recognized that other agenda topics had been raised and they decided to table EHE updates and related grant awards details until the next meeting, as more information should be available at that time. Dr. Gruber also mentioned that CDC released the Notice of Funding Opportunity for implementing EHE activities in the Phase 1 jurisdictions (New Orleans and Baton Rouge) and the application is due March 25, 2020. It will be a collaborative process with the multi-year grant. Expected to receive confirmation of the award in June with a start date of July 1, 2020. There will be an EHE update during the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS meeting February 10–11, 2020 in Washington, D.C.

## **V. New Business: Undetectable = Untransmittable Presentation**

Dr. Brandon Mizroch, Meta Smith-Davis and Alleen King-Carter provided a presentation on Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U). Dr. Mizroch explained four research studies support the science behind the U=U campaign. Meta Smith-Davis and Alleen King-Carter expounded upon the ways that U=U has a significant impact on the personal lives and interactions of People Living with HIV (PLWH).

Fran Lawless thanked the panelists for promoting the message of U=U. She explained that “we get push back from physicians” but U=U is the most revolutionary message in its lifetime. We want to let the world know that Undetectable=Untransmittable.

T. Kindall asked what has been your experience with providers who don’t believe in U=U; for example, what happens when people haven’t been taking their antivirals as they should and are detectable? What is your message for providers?

A. King-Carter explained the importance of having providers inform patients that when doses are missed, the medicine is still in your body for a limited amount of time, and it takes time for the virus to become active again. M. Smith-Davis recommended that providers should build relationships with clients so they can ask important questions and explain the importance of being undetectable. A. King-Carter recommended that medical staff should keep repeating the message that U=U works.

B. Mizroch stated that behaviors such as missing appointments are driven by stigma. When it comes to a blip, the virus may spike briefly but the viral load is still low. T. McCaa thanked the panelists for the presentation and testimony. She stated that “when I’m on the street and when I talk to the average person, they say ‘I can’t trust that the person is taking their meds (someone who is undetectable)’ what do you say to that person?” A. King-Carter explained that the person is not cured, he is undetectable. Even if you are undetectable, you are still positive. The same science that told you that HIV is HIV, that same science is telling you that taking medicine and being undetectable for 3-6 months is untransmittable. However, condoms are still important to avoid STI or pregnancy. M. Smith-Davis added that your sexual health is just as important as your heart health and lung health; advocate for your own sexual health.

F. Lawless wanted to clarify that the pushback from physicians is not just in New Orleans, but nationwide. Dr. N. Porter mentioned that PrEP is still important whether in a monogamous relationship or not.

## **VI. New Business: Louisiana AIDS Advocacy Network (LAAN) Presentation**

Alleen King-Carter presented on LAAN updated structure and focus for 2020. The organization has gone through a reorganization for increased regional and community representation and there is a need for a representative or community partner in Region 6 (Alexandria area). National observance days were discussed and a few are listed here:

A. National Public Health Week - 4/6/2020

B. National Youth HIV/AIDS Awareness Day - 4/10/2020

- C. National STD Awareness Week - 4/12/2020
- D. National Transgender HIV Testing Day - 4/18/2020
- E. Hepatitis Testing Day - 5/19/2020
- F. National Rural Health Day - 11/19/2020

Dr. Gruber explained that LAAN has been around for many years and experienced many chapters, however, there seems to be a high level of restructuring and asked what LAAN is hoping to accomplish in 2020. A. King-Carter acknowledged that its primary focus is on organizing events for community awareness and as it relates to legislation, she mentioned that the Louisiana Coalition on Criminalization and Health (LCCH) is working to identify a champion (someone within the legislature) to sponsor a decriminalization bill.

A. Basco asked if King-Carter was aware of any bills of interest to the Commission that may have been pre-filed. A. King-Carter stated that some ACA pre-existing legislative proposals are being considered and although that is on the federal level, it is an issue that needs to be monitored on the local level.

#### **VII. New Business: Hepatitis C Elimination Plan Presentation**

Dr. Alexander Billioux presented on the HCV Elimination Plan. Throughout the presentation, Dr. Billioux emphasized the importance of the many partnerships between LDH OPH, providers, and community-based organizations to make significant progress in a short period of time. Since the Hepatitis C subscription model was established in Louisiana, 2,491 people who have Medicaid or are housed at a state correctional facility have been treated. In addition, 166 providers have prescribed Hepatitis C treatment since July 15, 2019.

As Dr. Billioux wrapped up the presentation, Dr. Gruber recommended that this topic be continued for the next meeting and request that the Department of Corrections present information about HCV elimination efforts within their facilities.

#### **VIII. Other Business: Announcements**

Dr. Gruber stated that this Commission was reauthorized by the last legislative body and all Commission members will need to be reappointed for the upcoming term; thus, members will receive paperwork that needs to be completed in the near future.

A King-Carter encouraged members to consider joining LAAN.

T. Kindall stated that a survey investigating the knowledge and attitudes of nurse practitioners on HIV prevention and treatment was sent to the Louisiana State Board of Nursing.

#### **IX. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

The April meeting will be announced at a later date.

Anthony Basco moved that the meeting be adjourned. Tavell Kindall seconded.