

# Strategies and Resources to Increase Employment Opportunities of People Living with or at High Risk for HIV

**NATIONAL**  
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*Ending The Epidemic: Vocational Opportunities for People Living with HIV*  
*Ending The Epidemic in NYS Webinar*  
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# Employment is a Social and Economic Determinant of Health

- Employment - in connection to poverty, unemployment and underemployment - is identified as a key social and economic determinant of health
  - World Health Organization
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - National HIV/AIDS Strategy: Updated to 2020
  - Ending the Epidemic By 2020: New York State's Blueprint Plan to End the AIDS Epidemic

# National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS): Updated to 2020 Identifies Employment as a Social Determinant of Health



Increasing access to health care and improving health outcomes



Reducing the number of new HIV infections

Reducing HIV-related disparities and health inequities



**“In many cases, it is not possible to effectively address HIV transmission or care without also addressing structural factors and social determinants of health, such as poverty, lack of education, unemployment, homelessness and other issues.”**

# Employment and the National HIV/AIDS Strategy: Updated to 2020

## Goal 3:

### Reducing HIV-Related Disparities and Health Inequities

**To address disparities requires** focusing on disproportionately affected communities and populations; **implementing structural approaches to HIV prevention and care** that address conditions such as housing, education, employment, and food security; and reducing stigma and eliminating discrimination associated with HIV infection.

# Structural Interventions Focused on Employment and Employment Services

- Poverty, unemployment, and underemployment are social and economic determinants of health which critically influence outcomes along the HIV care continuum, including engagement/retention in care, treatment adherence and viral suppression.
- To implement and achieve the goals of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and the NYS Blueprint Plan to End the AIDS Epidemic requires both medical and structural interventions, including strategies to:
  - prevent unnecessary loss of employment, and
  - reduce poverty, unemployment and underemployment among people living with and at high risk for HIV.

# The NYS Blueprint Plan to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2020

- The Blueprint Plan spotlights the importance of addressing structural factors:
  - To achieve and maintain viral suppression, which is the clearest indicator that appropriate medical care is being provided, a person with HIV needs a host of non-medical resources.
  - Persons with HIV who lack jobs, housing, financial resources, adequate insurance, behavioral well-being, and/or personal support systems are less likely to achieve improved health outcomes.
  - To achieve end of AIDS goals, it will be essential to ensure adequate, stable levels of support to people living with HIV in housing, transportation, employment, nutrition, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and/or child care.
  - Employment is an important facilitator of long-term adherence and viral suppression.

## **ETE - BP30: Increase access to opportunities for employment and employment/vocational services**

- Research findings reflect the benefits of employment and employment services to HIV health and prevention outcomes.
- Need for current HIV service providers to identify and address employment-related needs of people living with HIV.
- Need for HIV employment programs, including targeted services for:
  - transgender individuals (especially transgender women of color) without regard to HIV status;
  - people with HIV returning to the community from or with a history of incarceration;
  - homeless youth (especially black and Hispanic/Latino MSM and transgender women) without regard to HIV status; and
  - HIV peer workforce education, credentialing and employment.

# High Rates of Employment Loss After HIV Diagnosis

- For the past 20 years, estimates of the rate of unemployment of people living with HIV have ranged from 40% to 70%.
- For many, an HIV diagnosis initiates or exacerbates and entrenches long-term poverty.
- The longer an individual is out of the workforce, the harder it is for them to succeed in employment.

# Impact of Unemployment and Underemployment

- **Loss** – of identity, personal and vocational development, social connections, focus on the future, structure for time and energy, engagement with evolving technology and software, self-esteem, role modeling for children, feeling of productivity, opportunities to contribute and to mentor, access to many or improved benefits, in addition to loss in economic status.

# Benefits of Employment to Mental Health

- Employment is associated with benefits to mental health:
  - Improved psychosocial and psychological functioning
  - Increased self-esteem
  - Decreased psychological distress
  - Decreased depression
  - Lower depressive affect
  - Higher general morale
  - Lower anxiety
  - Higher perceived quality of life

# Employment and HIV Health and Prevention

- Impact of employment on treatment adherence
  - 2013 ILOAIDS study evaluating 28 studies involving 8,743 people
  - Employed participants had 27% higher odds of optimal adherence to antiretroviral meds (>95% adherence)
- NWPC Vocational Development and Employment Needs Survey (2008-2009; n = 2506 PLHIV)
  - 63% employed when diagnosed; 32% employed when surveyed
  - Majority of employed (after period of not working) survey participants reported no change, or
    - decreases in: viral load (38%), alcohol use (35%), drug use (34%), condom-less sex (30%)
    - increases in: self care (49%), CD4 count (37%), medication adherence (21%)

# Employment Integrated in HIV Service Delivery

- Discuss and assess for employment interests, needs, concerns and questions
  - Integrate with assessment for income, housing, food/nutrition and other social and economic determinants of health
  - From intake and through-out subsequent follow up contact
- Provide or refer for information, counseling/coaching and advice on benefits (including financial, medical, housing), training, education and employment
  - Community resources and program (public and private)
  - Handouts and/or online resources

# Building Service Provider Capacity to Encourage Employment

- Identify and revise program policies and procedures presenting barriers to employment for participants
- Learn where key employment-related resources are in the community
  - Benefits planning and assistance
  - Adult education (including GED prep, ESL, literacy/numeracy)
  - Vocational rehabilitation
  - Employment services (including OTDA & other HIV employment programs, ACCES-VR, American Job Centers and community-based workforce development programs)
- Develop cross-sector linkage and liaison relationships with employment-related community partners

# HIV/AIDS Employment Initiative (OTDA)

- Administered by the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in cooperation with the AIDS Institute
  - OTDA Center for Employment & Economic Supports
- 7 contracts awarded in 2013
  - 1 to 5 years of funding per agency awarded
    - Contracts could continue through December 2018 (pending allocations or program change)
  - 5 grantees in NYC; 1 in Long Island; 1 in Syracuse
  - Approximately \$166,000 each per year
  - Eligibility: low income PLHIV residing in NYS

# Linkages to Increase Vocational Opportunities for People Living with HIV

- American Job Centers: workforce development community hubs
  - Serve all jobseekers, including people with disabilities
    - 89 “one-stop” career centers in NYS
    - Locally branded – e.g., Workforce1; Rochester Works!; CNY Works; Career Central
- ACCES-VR: NY state vocational rehabilitation agency
  - Serves people with disabilities
    - 15 District Offices
      - Additional satellite offices and community-based off-site service locations
- Funding of community-based HIV employment programs possible through both
  - Local ACCES-VR District Office or local Workforce Investment Board

# Access to Accurate Information: Work Earnings While Receiving Benefits

- Service providers and people living with HIV need adequate access to accurate information about work earnings-related policies for key programs including
  - SSI/SSDI
  - HASA (in NYC)
  - Medicaid, Medicare and other health coverage, and
  - subsidized housing (HOPWA, Section 8)
- Well-informed decision-making about working and transitions to employment depends on information accessibility
  - maintain or improve access to health care, housing and economic stability
- Service providers and people living with HIV need training
  - individual benefits advisement is needed by people living with HIV
  - education about community-level resources available for vocational training, education and employment services

# Online Training Curriculum for HIV Service Providers and Housing Providers



- Developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of HIV/AIDS Housing – fully launched in July 2015

[www.AIDS.gov/gettingtowork](http://www.AIDS.gov/gettingtowork)

# Additional Resources and Information

- ACCES-VR (formerly VESID) – NYS vocational rehabilitation agency (local District Offices)
  - [aces.nysed.gov/vr/district-offices](https://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/district-offices)
- American Job Centers – NYS local “one-stop” career centers
  - [servicelocator.org/onestopcenters.asp](https://servicelocator.org/onestopcenters.asp)
- NYESS – New York Employment Services System
  - [nyess.ny.gov](https://nyess.ny.gov)
- New York Makes Work Pay
  - [newyorkmakesworkpay.org](https://newyorkmakesworkpay.org)
- U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy – Topic: HIV/AIDS
  - [dol.gov/odep/topics/hivaids](https://dol.gov/odep/topics/hivaids)
- National Working Positive Coalition (NWPC)
  - [workingpositive.net](https://workingpositive.net)

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