

# HIV Services NEWSLETTER

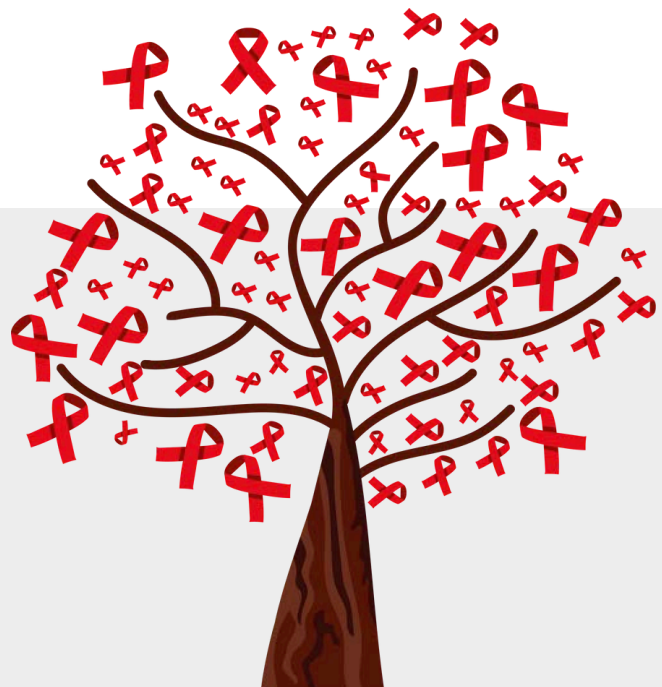
June 2025 / PRIDE Edition

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PRIDE Month is here, and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health (CCBH) and its HIV Services staff members are thrilled to be a part of the celebration!

Keep reading for more information regarding Pride events in your area, and how you can support local LGBTQ+ communities.



# PRIDE Month



Please join the HIV Services staff, partner agencies, and stakeholders at this year's local PRIDE events! Click on the links below for additional information.

## [MEDINA PRIDE PICNIC & CHALK THE SQUARE](#)

Thursday, June 5, 2025  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

## [PRIDE IN THE CLE](#)

Saturday, June 7, 2025  
11:00 AM - 6:00 PM

## [LAKE COUNTY PRIDE](#)

Saturday, June 14, 2025  
11:00 AM - 5:00 PM

## [ASHTABULA PRIDE FESTIVAL](#)

Saturday, June 21, 2025  
12:00 PM - 6:00 PM

## [GEAUGA PRIDE](#)

Saturday, June 21, 2025  
2:00 PM - 6:00 PM

## [LORAIN COUNTY PRIDE](#)

Saturday, June 28, 2025  
12:00 PM - 4:00 PM



## *The Fabric of Freedom*

Each year, the renowned World Pride celebration takes place in Washington, D.C. Although many regions across the country incorporate themes into their Pride Month events, the 2025 World Pride theme is "The Fabric of Freedom." This theme emphasizes the strength and unity of the LGBTQ+ community, and focuses on how individual identities can be complex and diverse, but should be celebrated and accepted all the same.

While this global call to action involves celebration, it also encourages activism and solidarity in the face of ongoing challenges within the LGBTQ+ community. Join us in support at your county's local Pride events!

# HIV Prevention

## *Program Updates*

The HIV Prevention Program at CCBH recently received its Notice of Award to continue providing funded HIV services for the upcoming grant year, which will run from June 1, 2025 through May 31, 2026.

This grant provides free testing services to populations of focus and places an emphasis on diverse and comprehensive outreach efforts throughout Northeast Ohio.

The HIV Prevention Program serves all of Ohio's Region 3 counties (Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina) and with the start of the new grant year, will be continuing partnerships with the AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, The Centers (formerly Circle Health Services), Family Planning Services of Lorain County, Medina County Health Department, and Signature Health.

Please join the HIV Prevention Team and its sub-recipient agencies at this year's local PRIDE events! Information is provided on the previous page.



## **New Hire:** *Jules Boylen*

Jules is CCBH's newest Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS). She previously worked at Equitas Health in the Ryan White Part B Program. They consider themselves as gender fluid and have spent many years working to improve the lives of the Trans community.

Jules was the University of Akron (UA) Undergraduate Government Senator and the President of LGBTUA for three years. They worked to achieve the first gender neutral bathroom at UA in 2014, and by 2017, they had achieved gender neutral bathrooms across the entire campus.

Jules has also worked with the Community AIDS network for six years in various roles, assisting persons living with HIV with housing, nutrition, and support. She served on the board of Trans Ohio for five years in an administrative role.

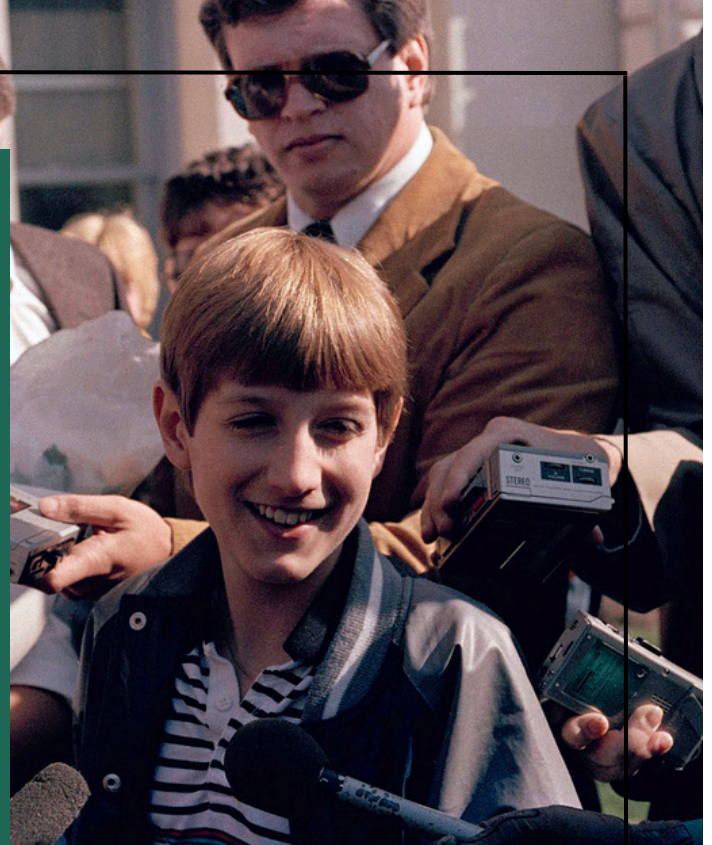
Jules recently received their Community Health Worker (CHW) certification at Kent State University and became a Certified Health Literacy specialist. Jules collects guitars, and loves to perform their own music during local community events.



# Ryan White Part A



## *Program Updates*



In September 2024, the Ryan White Part A team submitted a competitive grant proposal to continue to administer the Ryan White Part A Program. We are happy to report that CCBH will continue as the recipient of Ryan White Part A funds in the Cleveland TGA for FY2025 - FY2027!

In addition, the Part A recipient office released two Request for Proposals (RFPs) for FY2025 - FY2027. Through all of the applicants, 11 outstanding service providers were chosen: AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, The Centers (formerly Circle Health Services), Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Division of Senior & Adult Services, May Dugan Center, Mercy Health, MetroHealth, Neighborhood Family Practice, Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center, Signature Health, and University Hospitals.

Furthermore, Upward Spiral LLC was selected to provide facilitation management for the Cuyahoga Regional HIV Prevention and Care Planning Council. The CCBH Ryan White Part A Team looks forward to these continued successes and partnerships!

Lastly, the Part A Team would like to congratulate Antoinette (Toni) Mallory on her retirement! Toni was the Administrative Specialist for the recipient office for nearly seven years. Her organization, willingness to help, and intuitive spirit will be dearly missed as she officially retired from her position in February 2025. CCBH and the Ryan White Part A Team wishes her a happy, healthy, and fulfilling next chapter! The recipient office is now in the process of selecting a new Ryan White Administrative Specialist.

# Ryan White Part A

## *Clinical Quality Management*

The Clinical Quality Management (CQM) Program continues to build momentum with collaborations to improve the quality of care and outcomes for people living with HIV/AIDS across the six-county region.

In alignment with the Ryan White 2030 program goals, the focus remains to identify folks currently out-of-care and work toward re-engagement through the retention in care quality improvement (QI) project. Partner agencies providing outpatient ambulatory health services (OAHS) are actively reviewing data and preparing to launch initiatives to support long-term engagement in HIV care.

In addition to this retention work, the CQM Team is excited to announce the launch of a new linkage to care initiative. This initiative focuses on streamlining the diagnosis-to-care process, especially in high-impact settings such as emergency departments and community-based testing sites. By improving coordination and standardizing referral protocols, the CQM Team aims to reduce delays and duplicative work and ensure newly diagnosed individuals are linked to care quickly and efficiently.



## *Get Involved!*



Participating in the CQM Committee (CQMC) is a great way to stay informed about current QI initiatives, including the retention in care and linkage to care projects. Participants also gain access to training opportunities and collaborative discussions. No prior QI experience is needed, just a shared commitment to improving care for PLWH in the Cleveland TGA!

If you're interested in joining the CQMC or learning more about CQM work, please contact Melissa Hansen at [mhansen@ccbh.net](mailto:mhansen@ccbh.net) to be added to the listserv or to get more information.



# Ending the HIV Epidemic: *Prevention*



EHE Prevention continues to expand services and partnerships in Cuyahoga County. Utilizing the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance, CCBH has prioritized HIV self-test kit distribution as an innovative and essential role in ending the HIV epidemic. Currently, EHE provides HIV self-test kits free of charge to 12 partnering agencies operating as HIV self-test kit distributors.

In 2024, CCBH and partners distributed 2,586 HIV self-test kits in Cuyahoga County. Expanding HIV rapid testing in nontraditional spaces has also been a priority for CCBH. Notable new partners include Opportunity House, which provides supportive housing for men aged 18-24 with a diagnosed disability who have "aged out" of foster care or found themselves alone without a place to live. EHE Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) Sonji Deal conducts regular monthly testing and education at Opportunity House.

Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center and Thrive for Change began programming under EHE Prevention in January 2025 after being selected through a Request for Quotes (RFQ) process, and have since conducted 80 HIV rapid tests.

In April 2025, the EHE Team released a Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide high-impact HIV prevention and surveillance programs within Cuyahoga County, with a focus on bridging HIV testing gaps in the following settings: syringe service providers, emergency departments, correctional centers, and community outreach agencies. This RFP is for EHE Prevention funding for FY25, with the potential for funding for an additional four years. Selected agencies began services in the new grant year beginning June 1, 2025.

# Ending the HIV Epidemic: *Care*



Phase II of Ending the HIV Epidemic program began on March 1, 2025, following CCBH's acceptance of a partial award from the Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA). CCBH awarded eight subrecipients funds to start or continue HIV Care services. These agencies include the AIDS Taskforce of Greater Cleveland, Cleveland Clinic Foundation, MetroHealth System, Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center, Signature Health, The Centers, University Hospitals, and We Think 4 A Change.

Many of the core and support services that were provided during Phase I will continue into Phase II, including: Peer Navigation (EIS), Emergency Financial Assistance, Intensive Medical Case Management, Medical Transportation, Non-medical Case Management, Rapid Start ART (OAHS), and Psychosocial Support Services.

Two new service categories were added this year: Other Professional Services (Legal) and Mobile Health Clinics. Legal services will address specific legal matters related to HIV diagnosis, including assistance with and access to public benefits, discrimination or breach of confidentiality litigation, and preparation of healthcare power of attorney and living wills.

Mobile Health Clinics will address outpatient ambulatory health services for those who are not-in-care or difficult to retain-in-care, incorporating elements of home visits, telemedicine, and rapid start. Both of these new services categories are set to begin upon receipt of a full award from HRSA.

# Ending the HIV Epidemic



## *Community Advisory Group*

# 2025 SAVE THESE DATES

## CCBH EHE CAG MEETINGS

### PREVENTION

JAN 28, MAR 25, MAY 27, AUG 26, OCT 28  
3 PM - 5 PM

### CARE

FEB 18, APR 22, JUNE 24, SEPT 23, NOV 25  
3 PM - 5 PM

### FULL GROUP

JULY 22, DEC 16  
9 AM - 12 PM

[loveleadshere.org](http://loveleadshere.org)

The CCBH EHE Community Advisory Group (CAG) continues its success with subcommittee meetings on the fourth Tuesday of each month. With 140 community members, stakeholders, subrecipients, partners, and guests, the community has proficiently utilized its time together to collect direct feedback, insight, and participation to end the epidemic.

The CAG impacts Cuyahoga County's EHE program in multiple ways, including: (1) providing first-person insight on success and challenges; (2) informing programmatic and funding decisions; (3) highlighting what to be communicated to CCBH's funders; and (4) advising feedback to share with local providers.

The Prevention Subcommittee was held in January and March of this year. In January, members created EHE vision boards and shared concerns over the federal funding freezes that many organizations were suffering from. In March, the CAG hosted students from Hawken's Mastery School as they presented their final presentations on HIV Prevention and youth.

The Care Subcommittee was held in February and April. In February, the CAG brainstormed ideas of how to bring new voices to EHE from six different community sectors. In April, the CAG hosted a presentation and activity on community-based participatory research by Ladonne Montelione, EDI Program Manager at CCBH. From this activity, the CAG identified six SMARTIE (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely, inclusive, equitable) goals from which to develop over the next year.

For more information about the CCBH EHE CAG, please reach out to EHE Program Managers Erin Janowski at [ejanowski@ccbh.net](mailto:ejanowski@ccbh.net) and Brian Lutz at [blutz@ccbh.net](mailto:blutz@ccbh.net).



# Ending the HIV Epidemic



## *Outreach Efforts*

Securing the Main Library in Downtown Cleveland as an outreach site is a significant win for EHE DIS Sonji Deal. Participating in "Library Soundbites" offers a wonderful opportunity to engage with the community through live music and promoting health awareness in a relaxed, enjoyable setting. The weekly series started on May 7, 2025, and continues to draw a diverse crowd and help spread HIV awareness.

Sonji has also been distributing the "Test Me" campaign posters in local Cuyahoga County laundromats to reach the community in everyday settings, increase visibility, and encourage testing. The "Test Me" posters contain a QR code that leads to the Test Me page of the Love Leads Here website, providing community members with local testing resources, which are inclusive of both EHE-funded partners and other community stakeholders.

The EHE Team will continue with outreach efforts to maximize community engagement in non-traditional settings and hours.

# TEST ME

**Ask for the HIV test.**  
Take PrEP if you're negative.  
Get treatment if you're positive.  
Health for everybody.

**LoveLeadsHere.org/TestMe**  
Cuyahoga County Board of Health HIV Prevention & Care

**love  
leads  
here.**

*Ending the epidemic  
starts with testing. Visit  
[LoveLeadsHere.org](https://LoveLeadsHere.org)  
to learn more.*

# Ending the HIV Epidemic



*A New Era of  
Love Leads Here*

**FOR OUR FUTURE**

Let's make HIV history. The next generation will thank us.

**TEST PrEP U=U**

Love Leads Here is the Cuyahoga County Board of Health's HIV Prevention & Care resource website. Love Leads Here is designed to empower individuals in the community by raising awareness about sexual health risks and encouraging proactive measures. This campaign emphasizes the importance of knowing your HIV status and learning about other STIs such as syphilis and MPox.

Additionally, this campaign seeks to educate on vital prevention strategies, including PrEP and MPox vaccination. Since 2022, the Love Leads Here website has housed information on U = U, PrEP, HIV testing, HIV stigma, and syphilis; HIV testing and PrEP resources; downloadable campaign images; and social media toolkits.

On May 15th, a new and improved Love Leads Here website was relaunched. Modifications to the site include: a new landing page; storytelling videos featuring members of the Cuyahoga County community; a Love Leads Here social media viewer; extensive creative and aesthetic upgrades; a Cuyahoga Community Corner, highlighting local program updates and successes; a news panel; and upcoming events.

Campaign resources and social media toolkits, FAQs, and Resources are all still accessible on the website. Explore the website, share campaign content, and be sure to follow Love Leads Here on social media!

Instagram: **@loveleadsherecle**

Facebook: **@loveleadsherecle**

X: **@loveleadshere**



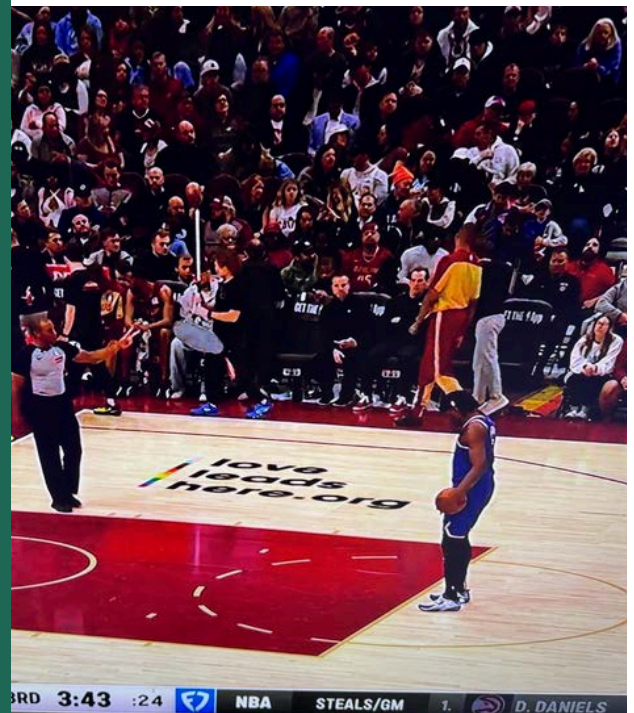
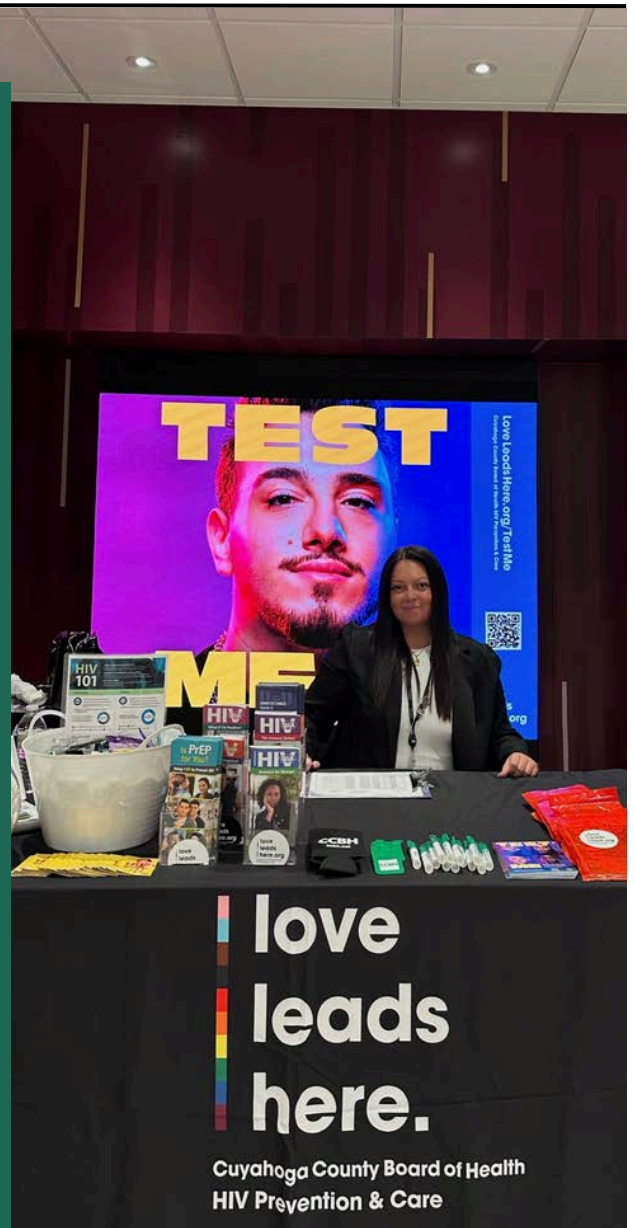
# Ending the HIV Epidemic:

## *Love Leads Here with the Cleveland Cavaliers!*

Love Leads Here has been partnering with the Cleveland Cavaliers to provide HIV outreach and education before and during select games since early 2024. Throughout the 2024-2025 Cavs season, EHE DIS Sonji Deal - with support from EHE Program Managers Erin Janowski and Brian Lutz, and Epidemiologist Clarence Williams - attended three games. They provided HIV educational materials and safer sex materials, and distributed 36 HIV self-test kits.

Other partnership components included a commercial produced by the Cavs team that ran in all Cavs shoulder programming shows for 6-8 weeks, which focused on HIV testing and featured Sonji Deal and Cavaliers in-arena host Ahmaad Crump. Love Leads Here's Test Me campaign was featured on Concourse Spectacular LED Display Signage at Rocket Arena, rotating between English and Spanish versions of the campaign.

Additionally, a virtual on-court branding component was executed, where the Love Leads Here logo was virtually branded on the 3-point line on the FanDuel network for one quarter for five games. Dates for this partnership were chosen to honor Black History Month and National Condom Awareness week.



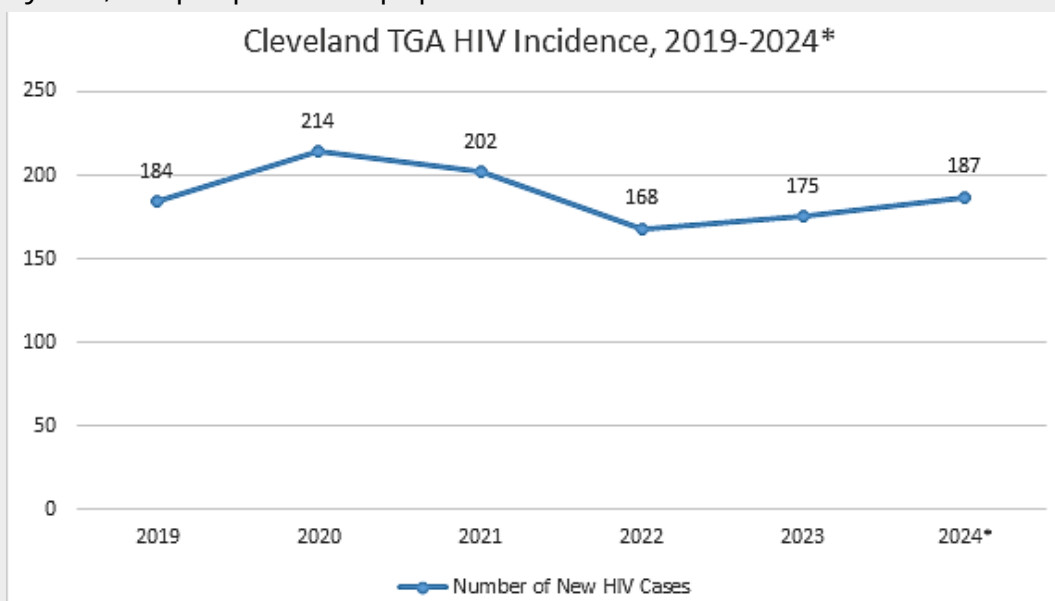


# Epidemiology

## 2024 Overview

At the end of 2023, there were **6,010 people living with HIV** (PLWH) in the Cleveland TGA (counties of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina). **Eighty percent** of PLWH were males, **53%** of those were over 50 years old, and **52%** were Black/African American.

In 2024\* there were **187 new cases of HIV** in the Cleveland TGA, an increase of 7% from the number of new cases in 2023. This equates to **8.69 new infections** of HIV for every 100,000 people in the population of the counties in the Cleveland TGA<sup>^</sup>.



### Highlights from 2024\* data:

- Age of new HIV cases is trending older. Average age of new cases was **35 years old**. New HIV cases ranged in age from 15-70 years old.
- **50%** of new cases were between 20-34 years old.
- **98** (52%) new HIV cases were in those who are Black. This is a 5.4% increase from 2023 totals.
- **29** (16%) new HIV cases were in those who are Hispanic/Latinx. This is a 45% increase from 2023 totals.
- **85%** of new HIV cases were male, **13%** were female, and **less than 1%** were transgender (MTF or FTM). Gender was unknown for 2% of cases.
- **34%** of cases were in males who noted sexual contact with another male (MSM).
- **2%** of new HIV cases noted injection drug use (IDU).
- There were **no cases of perinatal HIV** in 2024\*.

\*2024 data as of 3/4/2025. HIV case data downloaded from the Ohio Disease Reporting System (ODRS). Data is preliminary and subject to change as new/updated information becomes available. Analysis completed by the Department of Epidemiology, Surveillance, and Informatics at the Cuyahoga County Board of Health.

<sup>^</sup>U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey population estimates for 2023.

# Planning Council Corner

## Community Liaison Committee

### Are you a person living with HIV?

The Community Liaison Committee (CLC) is a place to connect and learn with other people who are living with HIV. The CLC works to make sure that the hopes and concerns of people living with HIV are at the center of the Planning Council's decisions. Join us to be part of the process!

**Virtual Meeting**  
**First Wednesday of the month**  
**12:00 - 1:30 PM**

Since this meeting is open only to people living with HIV, you must contact the Planning Council Facilitator to receive connection information.

**Lisa-Jean Sylvia**  
*Planning Council Facilitator*  
[lisajeane@upwardspiralconsulting.com](mailto:lisajeane@upwardspiralconsulting.com)  
216-264-9858  
(call or text)

## Survey Complete!

Nearly 10% of the people who receive Ryan White services in our region completed a survey. Thank you to everyone who made that possible!

**Results are available  
at the QR Code:**



## Seeking New Members!

The Planning Council is seeking new members, especially people living with HIV, in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina counties.

If you are interested in learning more, consider attending a meeting of the Full Planning Council or one of the subcommittees.

For more information, please contact Planning Council Facilitator, Lisa-Jean Sylvia.

# Planning Council Corner

## *Member Spotlight: Naimah O'Neal*

Planning Council Member since 2006  
Community Liaison Committee Co-chair



**Q: You have been on Planning Council for many years. Why do you choose to serve on Planning Council?**

**A:** I have served on the Planning Council for nearly a decade. As a person living with HIV, at first my decision to serve was based on wanting to learn about services for my own self-advocacy. Later, it became about giving back. As a Medical Social Worker who supports people living with HIV, I can assist my patients better. Planning Council gave me a voice and it allows me to be a voice for people who are not yet able to have a voice.

**Q: How has the experience shaped you?**

**A:** For the last 33 years, I have taught myself that I have a voice and it is okay to fight for myself and my community. I was always a shy person, but Planning Council and other growth opportunities have shaped me into the person I am currently. I think of myself as a lioness - taking a stand, sharing the knowledge I've learned to help my community of people living with HIV, and educating people who are not aware of their HIV status.

**Q: What do you want other people, especially people living with HIV, to know about the Planning Council?**

**A:** I want everyone to know that your voice matters. We need the whole community to assist if we are going to make the best decisions about how to spend Ryan White dollars so that people living with HIV can live longer and reach the goals they have in life. You don't have to be living with HIV to serve on Planning Council. You just need a heart that wants to make the whole community healthy. It really does take a village.

**Q: What is something that brings you joy?**

**A:** Helping people and spending time with my grandkids are things that bring me joy.



# Feedback



***We want to hear  
from you!***

The HIV Services community is rapidly growing each year as we continue to welcome new consumers, providers, and community members. As support and services for HIV resources expand, so does the reach of the HIV Services Newsletter.

This bi-annual newsletter is geared toward YOU, and we want to ensure that your voice is heard.

- **What did you enjoy reading about in the June 2025 issue?**
- **Which sections would you like to continue to see in future newsletters?**
- **What new content do you think could be added?**

Please email all comments and suggestions to Danielle LeGallee at [dlegallee@ccbh.net](mailto:dlegallee@ccbh.net).

We are looking forward to hearing your feedback!