



Leadership Academy Aims to Train and Inspire HIV Long-Term Survivors

The Reunion Project launches the AWARE LTS Leadership Academy, as in “aging with agency, resilience and engagement” for HIV long-term survivors.

June 5, 2025 By [Trent Straube](#)

People aging with [HIV](#) share unique experiences and needs. Who better to lead and support this cohort of long-term survivors than other folks just like them? And while leadership might not come naturally to everyone, the relevant skills can be taught. [The Reunion Project](#) launched an initiative to accomplish exactly that: The AWARE LTS Leadership Academy aims to cultivate a new generation of leaders from within the [HIV long-term survivors \(LTS\) community](#).

AWARE stands for “aging with agency, resilience and engagement.” The academy will provide “intensive training, mentorship and peer support to empower participants to lead advocacy efforts, shape policy and build inclusive, resilient communities,” [according to a press announcement from The Reunion Project](#), a national organization consisting of and serving HIV long-term survivors.

The inaugural academy will offer long-term survivors nationwide virtual training in leadership development, storytelling, advocacy and community engagement.

“Now more than ever, we must invest in leaders who can navigate a changing landscape while centering the lived experiences of those aging with HIV,” said Jeff Berry, executive director of The Reunion Project. “AWARE is a powerful step toward that future.”

“For too long, long-term survivors have been left out of critical conversations about aging, HIV and health equity,” added Larry Bryant, senior program manager at The Reunion Project. “The AWARE Academy is a direct investment in their leadership. It prepares them to sit at decision-making tables, influence policy and hold systems accountable to the communities they are meant to serve.”

To learn more about the academy, visit [ReunionProject.net](#) or email info@reunionproject.net.

The launch of AWARE Academy was announced June 5, which is recognized as HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day (HLTSAD). The date coincides with the first published report, in 1981, of what became known as AIDS. Effective treatment for the virus didn’t become available until 15 years later, in 1996.

About 1.2 million people are living with HIV in the United States. It's estimated that 50% of them are over 50 years old. By 2030, that proportion will rise to 70%.

Who counts as a [#Long-Term Survivor](#)? For more insight, see "[HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day 2025](#)," "[We Are Lifetime Survivors](#)" (about people born with HIV giving themselves a new name) and "[What's in a Name](#)," an essay on the debate over who qualifies as a long-term survivor.

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