A New NMAC Division: NMAC Training Center to End the HIV Epidemic in America

Our mission is to bring the voices of community to the important tables where decisions are made.

March 12, 2019 By Paul Kawata

NMAC is proud to announce our new NMAC Training Center to End the HIV Epidemic in America. The new center will be led by Linda H. Scruggs (lhscruggs@nmac.org). As an African American women living with HIV who has been a leader in the community for the last 25 plus years, she is the perfect person to lead us through this next phase of the work. The Center is committed to working with and training health departments and community-based organizations about ending the HIV epidemic. Our mission is to bring the voices of community to the important tables where decisions are made, particularly the voices of people of color living with HIV, transgender communities of color, black women, gay men of color and people of color on PrEP. Unfortunately, we continue to be the majority of new HIV diagnoses and the majority of people living with HIV. We also are not seeing the same benefits of PrEP because 70 percent of the people on PrEP are white.

The Center will integrate new programs with NMAC's existing initiatives including the United States Conference on AIDS, Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit, Over 50 living with HIV initiative, Youth Initiative, Transgender People of Color living with HIV, People of Color living with HIV, and a new PrEP initiative that will be announced next month. Through existing and new programs, we will work collaboratively to lead with race to ensure that these important voices are part of these critical discussions. Any effort to end the HIV epidemic requires a diversity of voices at the table. Not only do we need to be at the table, we also need to be hired as staff in health departments and community-based organizations. Leaders from target communities need to do more than be on advisory boards, we need jobs and we need to lead the implementation efforts that target our communities.

NMAC Training Center to End the HIV Epidemic in America

The Center is still in formation, but here are some of its initial initiatives.

>TED Talks @ USCA
The first project of the Center will coordinate the USCA Master Lecture Series on ending the HIV epidemic. Master Lectures are USCA's version of TED Talks. This year's series will be recorded and edited as online learning tools for planning councils. Since everyone can't attend USCA, recording the talks is a way to bring the information to the field. NMAC is pleased that Dr. Tony Fauci will give the first lecture. He will talk about how the Centers for AIDS Research (CFAR's) will be part of the collaborative solutions. Ending the epidemic requires local communities to work together in new and interesting ways. While this already happens in many jurisdictions, for others this will bring new players to the table.

> Voices of Community
Our communities are extremely diverse and to understand and reach them is key to success. Does your work place accommodate the diversity of clients and staff that reflects the epidemic? Does your leadership reflect your clients? To bring their voices to the table, NMAC will record community leaders at this year's National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta. We will ask them four (4) questions:

1. What does Ending the HIV epidemic mean to you?
2. How can we reach the 400,000 people living with HIV who have fallen out of care or are unaware of their HIV status?
3. How can we get more people on PrEP, particularly communities that have not seen the benefit of this science? and
4. How do we reach those communities that have eluded previous HIV prevention and care efforts?

If you are willing to be part of the taping, please contact Chip Lewis (clewis@nmac.org) and arrange a time to be interviewed in Atlanta. These tapes will be edited and used to open the 2019 USCA plenaries. After the conference, they will be put online as training tools for health departments and community-based organizations that are grappling with these questions.

> Federal Track of Workshops @ USCA

The HIV movement needs to hear directly from CDC, HRSA, IHS, NIAID, and SAMHSA (new partner). Since the conference is 30 days before the start to implement the federal plan, the Center offered federal agencies free workshop slots for sessions that answer concerns and trains the HIV workforce. There are many concerns that only the federal government can answer.

In addition to recording the Master Lecture services, the Center will record and edit select workshops to be put online. The specific topics and presenters will be decided in collaboration with our federal colleagues, but will include workshops on 1) PrEP, 2) U=U, 3) Community Planning Process, 4) Outreach to the Transgender Community, 5) Outreach to Gay Men of Color, 6) Outreach to People Living with HIV who have fallen out of care, 7) Outreach to Black Women, 8) How to get People of Color on PrEP, and 9) other vital topics for the field.

USCA is pleased to announce that CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield, NIAID Director Dr. Tony Fauci, and HRSA Administrator Dr. George Sigounas will speak at the Opening USCA Plenary on September 5. There are many details about the plan that we need to hear from them directly. Our movement is very concerned and torn about working with the administration. We need their assurances that planning will an open and fair process that will be led by community.

> Cultural Sensitivity @ The Center
Cultural sensitivity is a term that gets thrown around so much that it is sometimes meaningless. NMAC believes cultural sensitivity starts by hiring people from the target communities to lead the initiatives that are trying to reach them. This is much more than advisory boards or outreach workers; this is about putting community in implementation and program planning roles.

NMAC will support health departments and community-based organization to become culturally sensitive by working with them to hire people from community. Too often we are passed over because of our lack of education or job skills. If we are never hired, we can never develop the job skills needed for professional employment. This is particularly true for the transgender community and young gay men of color. HIV is not a high priority for them; it's about jobs and housing and safety. Our need for people with a vision from these target communities might just be a bridge to full time professional employment. Employment = HIV Prevention.

> Working with CFARs
The Center is working with the National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to bring the leadership from Centers for AIDS Research (CFARs) to the 2019 USCA. Ending the epidemic requires everyone at the same table. While that is happening in many local jurisdictions, bringing them to USCA will be a first. NIAID will also bring the AIDS Research Centers Program (ARCP) from the National Institutes for Mental Health to the conference.

The Center is committed to science-based solutions for ending the epidemic. We believe science will verify that people from the target communities must be involved in the design and implementation of HIV prevention and care efforts that target their communities. Our focus with the CFARs and the ARCPs will be on the implementation science needed to reach the 400,000 people living with HIV who have fallen out of care or are unaware of their HIV status and to get

more people of color on PrEP so that our communities can benefit from this science.

> Working with the Indian Health Service
The Center is in the process of developing a memorandum of understanding with the Indian Health Service (IHS). Their goal is to increase HIV prevention and care services for American Indians/Alaska Natives and the Center looks forward to supporting this initiative. It will be particularly important to make sure the work targets the two-spirit community. Per all of our discussions, this work must be staffed and include the voices of the communities they hope to reach.

IHS must get approval from Tribal Leaders before moving forward. Our goal is to work with them to bring a delegation from Indian Country to USCA so that their voices get integrated into the solutions. There will also be a track of workshops that targets American Indians/Alaska Natives.

> People Over 50 Living with HIV & Youth Initiative
The Center will work with NMAC's People Over 50 Living with HIV and the Youth Initiative to fully integrate them into solutions for ending the epidemic. Since the majority of people living with HIV are over 50 and by 2020 that number will grow to 70 percent, this diverse community is key to our efforts to reach the 400,000 PLWH who have fallen out of care or are unaware of their HIV status. When we first started this work, we never imagined that geriatric services would be needed. The Center believes that services must meet their clients where they are. To keep people in care, our services must expand for an aging of PLWH communities. That means bringing their voices to the table.

The Center's goal is to increase the diversity of people on PrEP. Youth will be key to reaching this milestone. We will work with NMAC's existing Youth Initiative to expand their learning about ending the epidemic. The pioneers in our field are aging and we need to train another generation to take us to the end. Even when we end the epidemic component of HIV, there will still be over one million Americans who need HIV care and treatment. If you are interested in being part of either of these initiatives, apply today online.

> Ending the Epidemic Scholars @ USCA
The Center will bring representatives from the 58 targeted jurisdictions to this year's USCA. Our goal is to build a community of leaders who can both participate on local planning councils as well as get hired to jobs to implement programs. Like our Over 50 Living with HIV and our Youth Initiative, these scholars will come to the meeting and receive a series of trainings that will better prepare them to be part of the local planning process and to identify key training needs to help them to be part of the HIV workforce. After attending USCA, NMAC will work via conference calls and webinars to keep these leaders connected and to provide a feedback loop on progress.

Scholars selected for this program will not only get the training at USCA, they will also be required to participate on webinars and other online materials that focus on PrEP and U=U. These are extensions of existing training programs by the Treatment division at NMAC. The ending the epidemic scholars will work with our Over 50 living with HIV, youth and social media fellows at

USCA to build leadership pools that can be accessed by health departments and community-based organizations.

The Center is committed to training the HIV workforce and support the development and evaluation of programs that reach the target communities that have eluded previous HIV prevention and care efforts. The Center will work to support diversity in staffing, particularly in leadership positions in the HIV workforce. Far too often we hear that organizations can't find qualified people to fill their positions. NMAC looks to educate and train a diverse HIV workforce who can take on those jobs. Minimum job qualifications often keep members of our community out of the job pool. NMAC wants to expand our movement's vision about what qualifies a person to do the job. When trying to reach young gay men of color who could benefit from PrEP, is it better to have a college degree or to be part of that community? This is particularly true for senior positions within agencies. It's not enough to hire only community outreach workers, we also need to be part of the program design and management.

Our efforts to end the HIV epidemic cannot continue with business as usual. If we stay on the same path, we will get the same results. Ending HIV means putting community in leadership positions. We need help raising money for the Center. If you can contribute or have thoughts on the ways NMAC can raise these funds, please contact Robert York (ryork@nmac.org).

This can happen in our lifetime!

Yours in the struggle,
Paul Kawata

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