



New Mexico HIV Prevention Community Planning and Action Group

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the New Mexico HIV Prevention Community Planning and Action Group (CPAG)?

CPAG is a partnership between the New Mexico Department of Health and community members who are infected with or affected by HIV or who have an interest in HIV prevention. It fulfills a mandated role to develop a statewide *Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan* and update it annually.

What is community planning for HIV prevention?

Community planning for HIV prevention is a collaborative process in which people from different walks of life, with different interests, responsibilities, and involvement in HIV prevention come together as a group to plan how to prevent HIV infection where they live.

Beginning in 1994, the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) changed the manner in which federally-funded state and local HIV prevention programs were planned and implemented. State and local health departments receiving federal prevention funds were required to share the responsibility for developing a statewide *Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan* with representatives of affected communities.

This community-based process enhances HIV prevention in three important ways by: 1) increasing meaningful community involvement in prevention planning, 2) improving the scientific basis of program decisions, and 3) ensuring that resources target those communities at highest risk for HIV transmission.

Prevention efforts are most successful when they are designed to meet the unique needs, cultures and issues of local communities. Because the populations at greatest risk of HIV infection vary across different parts of the United States, local planning efforts ensure that each community delivers HIV prevention appropriately.

Why do we call our group CPAG and not just CPG?

Around the United States, most HIV planning bodies are called "Community Planning Groups (CPG)" or "Prevention Planning Groups (PPG)." The New Mexico group added **Action** to its name to demonstrate its commitment to be an active and vocal advocate for issues related to HIV, sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and hepatitis. We are the Community Planning and ACTION Group because we believe that if "Silence = Death", then Action = Life!

Who serves on the CPAG?

The CPAG has up to 30 members including:

- People living with HIV/AIDS, their partners and families
- Concerned individuals who provide prevention and/or services to people with HIV/AIDS and disproportionately affected communities.
- Representatives of state government agencies
- Persons from communities at high risk of HIV infection
- Community leaders and advocates

The membership term is 2 years from the date an individual is selected to be a **decision-making member**. The CPAG has three statewide co-chairs. The co-chairs of six Regional Advisory Groups also serve as members of the statewide group. These co-chairs are nominated by the region and approved by consensus to serve as decision-making membership by the state CPAG. In addition, there are 15 at-large members from across the state. The membership must be representative of the HIV epidemic in New Mexico.

Members of the group include people of varied ages, gender, races, and sexual orientations. Some have been involved in the field of HIV/AIDS prevention for a long time; some are new to dealing with these issues. Many are people whose lives have been personally touched by HIV/AIDS or who themselves are living with HIV/AIDS.

All members share a common vision of stopping the spread of HIV. All are equal in the group. They have been selected for membership to allow their unique backgrounds, expertise and experience to enrich the community planning process. Everyone's opinion is important.

The CPAG seeks applications for membership on an ongoing basis. Individuals are nominated for membership either by themselves or by others.

What are the responsibilities of the CPAG?

The primary task of the CPAG is to develop a statewide **Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan** that describes prioritized target populations and a set of prevention activities for each target population. These priorities are identified based on their ability to prevent new HIV infection.

Key information necessary to develop the comprehensive HIV prevention plan is found in an epidemiologic profile and in statewide and regional Community Services Assessments (CSA). These must incorporate current data and best practices, using behavioral and social science theories when appropriate.

After developing and reviewing the findings and data in these resources, CPAG uses this evidence to set priorities regarding the target populations at greatest risk of new HIV infection. CPAG then works to identify the mix of HIV prevention strategies, models and interventions that will best meet the needs of each prioritized target population.

How often does the CPAG meet and how are decisions made?

The full membership of the CPAG meets every second Friday of the month, from 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM. These meetings typically run for approximately 5 hours including lunch, which is provided for all participants.

All decisions of the statewide CPAG are made using a **consensus** process. For this reason, members are known as decision-makers rather than voting members.

What are CPAG Committees and Taskforces?

The expectation is that all decision-making members will participate in at least one (1) task force or standing committee as part of their active CPAG status. At least 2 of the statewide co-chairs will be members of the by-laws Committee and 2 statewide co-chairs will be members of the PIR Committee. Permanent standing committees consist of:

- Membership/PIR Committee
- By-Laws Committee
- Technical Assistance Committee

In addition, there are 4 population-based taskforces that look at the specific trends, needs and issues faced by their respective populations. The taskforces contribute to the prioritization of sub-populations and effective interventions for the communities they represent. These taskforces are:

- Injection Drug Users (IDU)/Substance Users Task Force
- Persons Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH/A) Task Force
- Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/MSM Task Force
- Heterosexuals at Risk (HAR) Task Force

Is the CPAG only for planning prevention efforts? What about services for HIV-positive individuals?

The CPAG primarily works to stop the spread of HIV through community engagement, the education of key stakeholders, and development of a statewide *Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan*. The Department of Health uses this plan as the basis for its HIV/AIDS prevention funding decisions.

Though not directly providing services for HIV-positive individuals, the CPAG has played a role in the implementation of many important changes in New Mexico including:

- the availability of anonymous HIV testing
- the creation of a needle exchange program
- the creation and implementation of HIV prevention programs designed and delivered specifically to persons living with HIV and/or AIDS (PLWH/A)

CPAG feels strongly about the need to involve PLWH/A in the community planning process. This led the group to create a third co-chair position which must be filled by a PLWH/A, to ensure such representation among CPAG's leadership.

There is a parallel planning process for HIV services. This is conducted by the New Mexico Governor's Commission on AIDS. Some members of CPAG serve on this Commission as well, to ensure coordination between the two planning efforts.

Who funds the activities of the CPAG?

The CPAG is funded by the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), through the HIV Prevention Program of the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH).

How can I get involved?

The CPAG seeks applications for membership on an ongoing basis. Individuals are either self-nominated or nominated by others for membership.

Members whose expenses for participation are not covered by their employment are reimbursed for mileage.

Membership Responsibilities

Decision-making members of CPAG are expected to fulfill the following roles.

- Participate actively in the community planning process.
- Attend regular statewide meetings of the full CPAG. Failure to attend 3 consecutive meetings or 4 total meetings annually will result in their removal from decision-making member status.
- Participate actively on at least one committee or task force.
- Share one's experience and expertise with the CPAG.
- Serve as liaison with the public regarding community planning and activities. Keep the CPAG informed about the needs of the public.
- Assist in recruitment of CPAG members and committee participants.
- Participate in orientation trainings and learn about community planning principles and CPAG processes.
- Become familiar with the CPAG bylaws and the statewide *Comprehensive HIV Prevention Plan*.
- Review materials prior to meetings to be prepared to actively participate in discussions and decisions.
- Serve as formal or informal mentors to new members of the CPAG.

