



### Calling for Change:

Recommendations from the 2021 National Convening on HIV and Employment  
National Working Positive Coalition

#### **NWPC's National Convening on HIV and Employment**

Founded in 2003, the National Working Positive Coalition's (NWPC) mission is to facilitate systems change so people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV can consider, access, or maintain employment based on self-determined goals.

In April of 2021, NWPC hosted a National Convening on HIV and Employment, generating recommendations to strengthen responses to employment needs of priority populations in the U.S. HIV response.

- Participants included community advocates, service providers, researchers, and policy experts, with involvement of federal and state government officials, and people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.
- Key recommendations from the Convening are the basis for this presentation.
- The Convening was made possible through partnership with ViiV Healthcare, the U.S. People Living with HIV Caucus, and Penn State University, College of Education.

#### **The Unmet Employment Needs of People Living with or at Greater Vulnerability to HIV**

Community input and government Ending the Epidemic and HIV/AIDS Strategies identify employment and economic needs as key drivers of racial, ethnic, gender, and health disparities in HIV care and prevention outcomes.

- Efforts to address these needs remain underdeveloped.
  - Few HIV care or prevention initiatives identify and address employment needs.
  - Service providers need education and technical assistance to integrate responses to employment needs in HIV care and prevention initiatives.
  - Cross-sector coordination and collaboration is needed across government and community-based health, workforce development, education, housing, legal, and other service systems.

#### **Key Recommendations: Service Responses**

##### **1: Expand access to community-located employment services for people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.**

Establish flexible government and private funding initiatives to support implementation of and sustain community-located HIV-focused employment services programs.

- Rationale:
  - Community-located services will enable people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV to access employment-related information, services, and resources.
  - When possible, these services are to be guided, staffed, and delivered by people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV to ensure that these programs are responsive to the community in need of the services.

## **2: Establish and support local, state, regional and national HIV employment network initiatives.**

Provide resources and technical assistance to local, state, regional and national network initiatives to address employment needs of people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.

- Rationale:
  - HIV-focused employment initiatives require coordination and partnership among multiple service systems, informed by local, regional, and cultural contexts.
  - This allows for the engagement of the diverse representation of stakeholders needed for effective responses to employment needs.

## **3: Support the development of an online repository of HIV-responsive employment-related information and resources.**

Develop an online platform to support individuals, and HIV-responsive employment services and network initiatives.

- **Resources for individuals**
  - Support for individuals considering employment needs, goals, and strategies
  - Links to local employment-related services and resources
  - Information on working and access to financial, housing, and health coverage benefits, and links to benefits advisement resources
  - Information on legal rights and protections, and related legal services
- **Resources for service providers**
  - Support for providing relevant employment-related information and linkages to services and resources
  - Information on effective employment service delivery models and practices
- **Resources for policy advocates and policy makers**
  - Information on key policy issues, developments, and opportunities related to strengthening responses to employment needs of people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.

### **Key Recommendations: Policy**

#### **1. Establish an HIV and employment policy work group.**

- Establish a multidisciplinary task force on HIV and employment with the charge of developing a plan to expand and improve employment opportunities for people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.

- Ensure the work group includes diverse representation of people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV, key federal agencies (DOL, ED, HHS, HUD, SSA), employment service providers, researchers, employers, and community advocates.
- This group’s policy work will include:
  - A systematic review of key relevant laws, regulations, and administrative policies
  - Advocating for and monitoring implementation of employment-related provisions in the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and Ending the HIV Epidemic Plans

## **2. Collaborate with disability and chronic health condition advocates.**

Engage experts in disability and chronic health conditions to:

- Foster understanding and facilitate engagement with the broader community of disability and chronic health condition advocates.
- Strengthen alliances and coalitions for collaboration on employment-related issues that impact all people with disabilities and/or chronic health conditions.
- Share their knowledge, including best service delivery models and practices.

## **3. Disseminate the findings and recommendations from the 2021 National Convening on HIV and Employment.**

- Develop and support implementation of a dissemination strategy of the Convening findings and recommendations to respond to the urgency of needs, and to allow for greater community input into implementation of the recommendations moving forward.
- Host additional meetings with the Convening participants and others to report back on the dissemination and implementation of Convening recommendations, effective practices, emerging research, and policy developments, and to obtain new or revised recommendations.

## **4. Build and support systemic capacity to address employment needs of people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.**

- Integrate training across service delivery sectors.
  - Implement training across HHS (HIV care and prevention), the Dept. of Labor (workforce development), the Dept. of Education (vocational rehabilitation), HUD (HOPWA) and the Social Security Administration.
  - Update the HUD/DOL “Getting To Work” online training curriculum for service providers, and DOL/ODEP’s suite of HIV and employment resources.
- Coordinate federal agency resources among DOL, ED, HHS, and HUD to provide employment services with supportive services of HHS’ Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (HRSA-HAB) and the CDC Division of HIV Prevention (DHP).
- Collaborate with the Social Security Administration to establish pathways ensuring access to employment services and information about HIV care and supportive services for applicants living with HIV who are denied disability benefits.
- Provide funding for state level grants to support employment services and network initiatives.

## **Key Recommendations: Research**

### **1. Evaluate impacts of vocational development and employment services, and employment status.**

- Implement and evaluate HIV-focused employment services.
  - Design for outcomes focusing on quality of life; health, racial, ethnic, gender, and economic equity; and HIV care and prevention.
  - Ensure accessibility and responsiveness to those with greatest employment needs.
  - Prioritize implementation strategies for replication in jurisdictions most impacted by HIV, and by health and economic disparities.
  - Build on existing effective employment initiatives.
  - Provide technical assistance and support for new employment services initiatives.

### **2. Identify employment-related needs and services at local and state levels.**

- Implement statewide and/or local employment needs assessments to identify employment needs and barriers for people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV.
- Utilize employment needs assessment of people living with or at greater vulnerability to HIV to inform development of responsive training, service delivery and policy.
- Conduct network analysis to examine the impact of cross-sector service network coordination among public health, workforce development, education, legal, and housing service providers on HIV care and prevention outcomes.

### **3. Develop a *Considering Work and Well-Being* framework for HIV care and prevention.**

Support development of a *Considering Work and Well-Being* HIV care and prevention service delivery and program evaluation framework reflecting recommendations, values, and priorities articulated by community advocates.

- Rationale:
  - This framework would provide a consistent approach to evaluating employment services incorporating community engagement, quality of life and well-being in addition to health and prevention outcomes into grantmaking and employment services initiatives.