

**Louisiana Commission on HIV, AIDS and Hepatitis C Education,
Prevention and Treatment
January 12, 2021
9:00 am – 11:00 am
Virtual Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/7789959325>
Or Telephone:
USA 602 333 0032
Conference code: 712643**

Commission Members Present:

Anthony Basco, Tamara Boutte, Baylor Boyd, Angie Brown, Amanda Dumas, DeAnn Gruber, Mitch Handrich, Nick Harris, Andrea LaPlante, Fran Lawless, Randy Lavespere, Austin Matthews, David Mushatt, George Nawas, Tewabetch Negatu, Jaqueline Porter, Norma Porter, Meta Smith-Davis, Stephanie Taylor

I. Call to Order

II. Roll Call

Fran Lawless took a roll call of Commission members and their designees.

III. Old Business: October Minutes Approval

Commissioners reviewed minutes from the October 23rd meeting. Austin Matthews motioned to approve the minutes; Tamara Boutte seconded the motion. Commissioners voted by voice to approve. Motion carries.

IV. New Business: HIV Criminalization work group

Fran Lawless introduced the HIV Criminalization Workgroup and Austin Matthews as the chair. Fran appointed the workgroup members by name. Austin proceeded with reading the HIV Decriminalization letter to be sent to Governor Edwards and members of the Louisiana State Legislature.

Comments from commissioners:

Meta Smith-Davis: Can we use “HIV acquisition or transition” instead of “HIV infection.” Austin M. motions to approve edit; Stephanie Taylor seconded the motion. Motion carries.

Anthony Basco: “Hep C” can we change it to “Hepatitis C”

Mitch Handrich: Motion to discuss changing the title of the commission from “HIV/AIDS” to “HIV, AIDS” in new business for next commission meeting.

It was suggested and agreed upon that the chair and co-chair sign the letter and the remaining commissioners be listed by name.

Austin M. motioned to approve letter pending grammatical and spelling errors, Anthony B. seconded the motion. No objections. T. Negatu abstained from voting. Motion carries.

V. New Business: DOC Updates

HIV/HCV DOC update presented by Jean Schexnayder and Elizabeth Britton.

Discussion took place regarding alternate methods of post release linkage for people living with HIV. Fran Lawless asked if information on where to obtain care could be shared before release. Jean Schexnayder stating that a list of case management agencies could be provided, and letters will be sent to medical staff at DOC to share with individuals pre-release. Stacye Falgout from DOC offered to work with Jean to shore up linkage during this time that outside staff are not allowed in DOC facilities due to COVID-19.

Covid-19 DOC Update- Dr. Randy Lavespere reported that staff vaccines are underway and vaccine for general population age 70+ are to begin in January. Overall COVID-19 infections and deaths were reported.

LDH has strict guidance to vaccinate health care providers and first responders first then the general DOC population age 70 and older. Currently there is a five dollar incentive to get vaccinated, which is placed on their commissary account.

T. Negatu stated that any messaging to those in DOC facilities should address historical basis for mistrust of the vaccine.

VI. Other Business: Announcements

It was announced that on April 10, 2021, a Hepatitis C Provider training will occur virtually. This is designed for healthcare providers who would like to know more about Hepatitis C and treatment strategies.

VII. Next Meeting Date: The commission members agreed that the meeting should be held the week of April 5th. The next legislative session starts April 12th, so a meeting beforehand could include a review of any relevant bills filed in advance of the session. Natalie will send a Doodle Poll to narrow down the date and time.

VIII. Adjournment: DeAnn Gruber motioned to adjourn the meeting, Tamara Boutte seconded the motion. Motion carries.



State of Louisiana
Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Public Health

January 19, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards & Members of the Louisiana State Legislature:

The Louisiana Commission on HIV, AIDS, and Hepatitis C Education, Prevention and Treatment is charged with the responsibility of advising the Governor, the Louisiana Department of Health, and the Legislature. Currently, Louisiana is engaged in a bold plan called Ending the HIV Epidemic: A Plan for America (EHE). This initiative aims to reduce new HIV transmissions in the United States by 90% by 2030. HIV criminalization is a major barrier to ending the HIV epidemic. Louisiana laws that criminalize HIV are not based on science and must be changed. These laws discourage testing and prevent public health experts from responding effectively by perpetuating stigma, racism, xenophobia, social and economic injustice, and reducing the willingness for people to participate in HIV prevention, testing, and care.

Public health experts state that HIV criminalization laws and policies are not effective public health interventions as they discourage people from initially getting tested for HIV. In addition, people living with HIV are in fear that they may be incarcerated for consensual sex even if there is no transmission. Despite the intentions of Louisiana's HIV specific criminalization laws, we rank 4th in the nation in new HIV diagnosis rates.

Our current state law does not focus on an intent to transmit, but instead focuses on the very broad standard of "intent to expose." The focus on exposure ignores science demonstrating that persons with an undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit the virus or "Undetectable equals Untransmittable" ("U=U"). It also ignores HIV prevention programs and tools such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and condoms.

Therefore, we advocate revising existing laws to decriminalize HIV in order to encourage testing and treatment and encourage the residents of Louisiana to live healthy lives. We support the following recommendations from the Louisiana Coalition on Criminalization and Health (LCCH) that follow the science and promote good health:

LCCH Inclusions for a Modernized Law in Louisiana

1. Include scientifically accurate information regarding HIV transmission
2. Mandate proof of intent to transmit HIV in line with other similar statutes
3. Remove this charge from the sexual offense registry
4. Reduce this charge to a misdemeanor offense

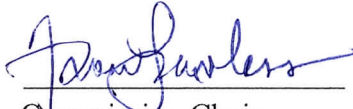
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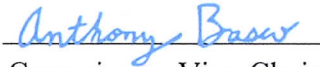
5. Retroactively remove anyone on sexual offender registry
6. Remove disclosure requirement
7. Include language explaining that not using condoms or not having an undetectable viral load does not mean intent to transmit
8. Transmission must occur for conviction

We invite you to schedule a dialogue with our criminalization workgroup to further explore opportunities to address Louisiana's HIV criminalization statute. Our next workgroup meeting will be held on February 26th at 1 P.M. If you would like to attend or this time does not work for you, please contact workgroup chairperson, Austin Matthews, at amatthews2@lsu.edu or 225-384-0314. We look forward to working with you and helping to educate your constituencies on improving the health of all Louisianans.

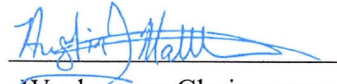
Sincerely,



Commission Chair
Fran Lawless



Commission Vice-Chair
Anthony Basco



Workgroup Chairperson
Austin Matthews

Louisiana Commission on HIV, AIDS, and Hepatitis C Education, Prevention and Treatment

Commission Members

Anthony Basco	Fran Lawless
Damian Bellon	Randy Lavespere
Tamara Boutte	Austin Matthews
Baylor Boyd	Tamachia McCaa
Angie Brown	David Mushatt
Tanya Brown	George Nawas
Amanda Dumas	Frank Opelka
H. Glenn Anderson, Jr.	Jacqueline Porter
DeAnn Gruber	Norma Porter
Mitchell Handrich	Jennifer Singh
Nick Harris	Paul Salles
Tavell Kindall	Meta Smith-Davis
Alleen King-Carter	Lee Stevens
Andrea LaPlante	Stephanie Taylor