

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL
LGBTQIA+ Workgroup
MINUTES

October 18, 2024

• Members Present:

Krystal Oriadha, Council Member District 7, Co-Chair
Courtney Mariette, Deputy Director, Office of Community Relations, Co-Chair
Jermaine Wyatt, Director of Community Health, Us Helping Us
Jason Jude, Chief of Teams, Us Helping Us
Jose Villegas, Deputy Director/Chief of the Investigation Division
Office of Human Rights

• Member Absent:

Elana Belon-Butler, Director, Department of Family Services
Dr. Diane Young, Associate Director, Family Health Services Division,
Department of Health
Khouri Lassiter, Advocate for Youth
Lauren Wethers-Coggins, Department of Social Services

• Other Present:

Kyla Hanington, Public Outreach & Engagement Division Manager
Office of Human Rights

• Staff Present

Sandra Eubanks, HHSPS Committee Director
Rhonda Riddick, HHSPS Committee Aide
Tiffany Hannon, Chief of Staff to Council Member

• Welcome & Opening Remarks

Co-Chair Oriadha reiterated the purpose of the LGBTQIA+ Workgroup, stating that the stakeholders at the table are critical to addressing community issues, fostering partnerships between nonprofits and government, advocating for policy changes, and exploring resource investment in the LGBTQIA+ community.

The meetings are public, recorded, and accessible online, with presentations made available to the committee.

- **Review of Minutes**

The minutes were approved as presented.

- **Presentation:**

Jermaine Wyatt, LICSW,
Director of Community Health and Health Equity,
Us Helping Us

Dr. Wyatt, Director of Community Health and Health Equity at Us Helping Us, presented an overview of the organization, founded in 1985 as a self-help group for men living with HIV, initially focused on addressing the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of its members. It has since grown to become one of the largest Black gay-founded and led HIV service organizations in the U.S. Their mission emphasizes improving the health and well-being of Black gay men and reducing the impact of HIV/AIDS in the Black community inclusively.

Dr. Wyatt indicated that Us Helping Us operates in three (3) locations: Georgia Avenue in D.C., the Thurgood Marshall Center on 12th Street in D.C., and Professional Plaza in Landover, Maryland (Prince George's County). Their services focus on meeting the needs of underserved and marginalized populations, providing PrEP, PEP, and HIV clinical care with on-suite medical providers, sexual health screenings, mobile testing units for community outreach, and mental health and substance use prevention and counseling services. Us Helping Us provides behavioral interventions focused on healthy relationships and HIV prevention.

Us Helping Us also offers harm reduction services as a Maryland Overdose Response Program (ORP), providing syringe services, needle exchange, and overdose prevention education in both D.C. and Prince George's County. Additionally, they highlighted their workforce development program, Project Growth, which supports transgender and non-conforming youth through GED prep, job training, and certification. Peer educators in Prince George's County focus on HIV prevention and support for Black and Latino men who have sex with men.

Dr. Wyatt shared details about Us Helping Us "Denim Collection" at their Landover drop-in center. This initiative supports social determinants of health by offering resources like a "denim closet" for clothing, a food pantry called the "denim cupboard," and the "house of denim," a community space rentable for ballroom events, training, and gatherings. Peer educators use this space for runway practices, fostering community engagement. Additional services include access to showers, sexual health screenings, case management, HIV specialty care, behavioral health, and substance abuse support at the Maryland location.

Dr. Wyatt indicated that Us Helping Us is actively involved in research focused on minorities and sexual health, with several ongoing studies and protocols aimed at contributing to this field.

US Helping Us explores housing and community development initiatives, gender-affirming care, and expanding culturally appropriate research and services to address community needs. Mr. Jason Jude continued the presentation, discussing current job openings at the organization.

- **Q&A**

Co-Chair Oriadha inquired about outreach efforts and intake processes, expressing concern about how well they work, whether there are gaps, and if similar community engagement and turnout challenges are observed, especially compared to events in D.C.

Dr Wyatt stated that the organization leverages active partnerships for community events, which improves turnout through collaboration. They rely on statistical site surveillance data for outreach to identify high-traffic areas for deploying mobile units and offering sexual health screenings. This data-driven approach helps them reach people where they are, and partnering with other organizations has proven successful in enhancing service engagement.

Mr. Jude further explained that the organization has utilized significant events like the D.C. Black Pride to increase visibility and connect people to care. They plan to host events in Prince George's County to engage the community. With Work Pride next year, they aim to organize events throughout the area, including testing promotions at these large gatherings, to connect individuals with their services further and link them to care.

Jose Villegas, Deputy Director, Office of Human Rights, asked about the number of people assisted in Prince George's County and any feedback on gaps in government assistance. Dr. Wyatt acknowledged that they did not have immediate data but offered to consult their evaluator for information. Dr. Wyatt will send the data and response to Ms. Riddick to share with the group.

Mr. Villegas asked about reports of discrimination among those they assist. Dr. Wyatt noted that they hadn't received such feedback but would check with their team to confirm.

Co-Chair Oriadha asked about partnerships for wraparound services. Dr. Wyatt confirmed they have active MOUs of Understand with organizations like Hearts to Hand in C.C. and are building similar partnerships in Prince George's County. If a client has unmet needs, they provide case management and, if needed, involve their partnership manager to establish formal agreements with relevant organizations.

Co-Chair Oriadha questioned if the counseling services are just for anyone who comes or is someone who's diagnosed. Dr. Wyatt explained that the counseling services are open to everyone, not just those diagnosed with specific conditions, provided there is clinician availability. They also offer group counseling, including a "Cypher" group for men actively using, a women's group, and another men's group. Additionally, they conduct behavioral

interventions focused on prevention.

Co-Chair Oriadha asked about the age range of the clientele participating in the programs provided by Us Helping Us. Dr. Wyatt shared that most services are focused on adults. Still, the organization does have youth programming, including the “Hip Hop to Promote” intervention and a partnership with Columbia Heights Educational Campus in D.C. to serve high school students. They also can serve youth at their denim location, supporting individuals as young as 13.

Co-Chair Oriadha asked whether they work with Prince George’s County public schools. Dr. Wyatt indicated that the organization has begun engaging with them, having had some initial information discussions with school representatives. Dr. Wyatt indicated that he has been in contact with Mr. Moody at the School System, who oversees student affairs.

Elana Butler, Director of the Department of Family Services, asked about partnerships with county agencies. Dr. Wyatt indicated that they have formal partnerships with Bowie State University and Prince George’s Community College, providing testing services to students. They also collaborate informally with other nonprofits, such as Heart to Hands, to extend support, though these partnerships are not formal agreements.

Co-Chair Oriadha asked whether the PrEP and PEP services were in-house. Dr. Wyatt stated that the organization offers PrEP and PEP services in-house with providers who can prescribe the medication directly. Payment options include insurance coverage, and they also accommodate individuals without insurance, potentially through a sliding scale or other arrangements, though specifics would be confirmed by their team.

Co-Chair Oriadha asked about the organization's source of funding. Mr. Jude indicated that the organization receives funding from multiple sources, including state and county grants and sponsorships from various departments. They are also working to expand and diversify their funding sources.

Co-Chair Oriadha thanked the presenters, highlighting opportunities to enhance resources and services for county residents. The Workgroup looks forward to receiving follow-up information about the breakdown of services for county residents and discussing ways to improve advertising accessibility of services. It was confirmed that the organization uses a mobile unit to reach activities in the central part of the county.

- **Review of Consolidated Subgroups**

Co-Chair Oriadha reviewed the breakdown of the subgroups. Each subgroup will use a standardized template to submit recommendations, facilitating the report’s compilation. Meetings for these subgroups are set to begin in November, with a break in December due to the Council and holiday recess.

Members are encouraged to focus on recommendations during subgroup meetings and to

communicate any needs for presentation or additional information to the Co-Chairs. These meetings will be open to the public and recorded.

Mr. Villegas inquired about the definitions and focus areas for Public Education, Public Safety, and cross-agency Coordination. Co-Chair Oriadha explained each focused area.

- **Identify Next Steps**

The following steps involve finalizing meeting dates. An email requesting members to choose subgroup leaders has already been sent to members. If there are no volunteers, the Co-Chairs will appoint leaders to ensure progress. Responsibilities include reminding members of meeting times and managing the recommendation document.

- **Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting date is November 15, 2024, at 2:00 PM.

- **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 PM.