

Penn Mental Health AIDS Research  
Center Community Advisory Board  
(PMHARC CAB)

Strategic Plan

## Introduction

The Penn Mental Health AIDS Research Center's (PMHARC) core mission and integrating theme is to implement innovative studies to transform how people with both mental illness (e.g., depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], cognitive dysfunction, and substance abuse) and HIV/AIDS are treated and managed to optimize psychiatric, behavioral, and medical outcomes and achieve a better understanding of the biological, psychological, and behavioral mechanisms underlying these combined illnesses and treatments.

The PMHARC has 5 specific aims, which are closely aligned with the mission of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and the Division of AIDS Research. These are to:

1. Establish an organizational structure and build capacity at Penn/CHOP that will foster innovative, interdisciplinary and synergistic basic, clinical, behavioral, and translational research collaborations and programs around the central theme of mental illness and HIV/AIDS to facilitate studies across the life cycle, including children, adolescents, pregnant women, adults, and the geriatric population.
2. Create shared Core research resources that will facilitate the conduct of novel, integrative approaches to the simultaneous treatment and management of mental illness and HIV/AIDS.
3. Promote the recruitment and professional development of pre-doctoral and post-doctoral trainees, as well as junior and senior faculty, in pursuing new research programs focused on outcomes in HIV-infected mentally ill patients, with special focus on engaging more under-represented minorities and women in Center activities and enhancing the cultural competency of Center studies.
4. Stimulate and fund pilot research studies in support of new opportunities for extramural funding in areas related to the central theme of the Center.
5. Contribute to the scientific productivity and impact of the NIMH HIV/AIDS Research Center Program by specifically focusing on people with mental illness and promoting collaborative research among other Centers.

Center investigators study a set of common variables to develop and evaluate innovative, integrated treatments for comorbid mental illness and HIV/AIDS:

1. Neurocognitive functioning;
2. Adherence to treatment;
3. Drug-drug interactions;
4. A common set of biomarkers to assess the status of psychiatric disease, HIV/AIDS, and comorbidities, including markers of immunity and metabolism.

In the Fall of 2014, the Penn Mental Health AIDS Research Center (PMHARC) established the Community Advisory Board (CAB). During the first year, the CAB built an infrastructure that would support the foundation for the future growth and impact of the Center. The CAB developed an interdisciplinary community board with community and clinical experiences that promote the primary mission of the only Center of its kind in the country. This is accomplished by educating providers on research and on the best practices and treatment of mental illness

among people living with HIV/AIDS. A critical part of the CAB's mission is to ensure that the research being conducted is relevant to, understood by, and conducted with the support of the communities most affected by HIV and mental illness.

By the Spring of 2015, the PMHARC CAB's mission was defined: "to promote the mental health of people living with HIV infection and AIDS through research, evidence based treatments, and education. The CAB will foster communications and partnerships among affected individuals, advocacy and provider organizations and researchers, and will help guide the PMHARC research agenda."

### **Our Vision**

- Create awareness by developing guidelines that the Philadelphia Public Health Community will find valuable by focusing on dissemination of the science related to mental health and HIV.
- Develop guidelines that will help in creating policies and procedures that can expand the intersection of mental health and HIV/AIDS in the Philadelphia community.
- Advance the placement of signature services in the Philadelphia Community where research is being conducted.
- Develop community leadership to support investigators, while steadily addressing the current and emerging challenges between mental health and HIV prevention and treatment.
- Review and provide feedback on ethical consideration and the impact it has within communities when conducting research with vulnerable populations.

### **Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats (Challenges) - SWOT Analysis**

The SWOT analysis conducted by the strategic planning committee reveals that the PMHARC CAB is a board with solid and diverse core strengths that can be leveraged to chart and establish an effective future direction for the PMHARC (see Table on page 3).

The creation of the initial forum "Bench to Bus Stop," brought researchers and providers from across the city to an initiative to see, meet and hear all the services and research that is going on in Philadelphia. This forum can be continued and expanded with the CAB taking a lead or working together with the PMHARC leadership. The CAB strategically can cultivate stronger relationships with Philadelphia's Community Behavioral Health (CBH)/Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)/ and its leadership.

The CAB is mindful of the revised Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) International Ethical Guidelines for Health-Related Research Involving Humans, especially the guidance concerning community engagement with vulnerable populations. The CAB will review and provide feedback on ethical considerations when conducting research with vulnerable populations and its impact on other communities.

In addition, PMHARC may be facing significant budget constraints for the near future which will affect the CAB's resources to provide engagement with the community. There are opportunities for the CAB to build and seek partnerships, but certain policies that are in place restrict the CAB from pursuing and building relationships with pharmaceutical companies. Funding challenges can stifle future growth for the CAB, but our opportunities to build relationships may outweigh our challenges by creating trainings for frontline workers in the mental and HIV/AIDS health communities that may be funded by different organizations who want the trainings and continuing education units (CEUs). It would be a great opportunity to create toolkits and

templates for city-wide health care facilities and service planning centers. These will be developed with the support of PMHARC and the University of Pennsylvania that will help in connecting researchers and providers, but also providing updated training for frontline workers in behavioral and HIV/AIDS health care services.

### SWOT Analysis Table

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|---|---|
| <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only center in the nation that focuses exclusively on mental health and HIV/AIDS</li> <li>• Diversity of our board regarding discipline of community and clinical experiences (Interdisciplinary community-based approach)</li> <li>• City-wide initiative to connect researchers and providers – Bench to Bus Stop</li> <li>• Penn affiliation and its connection to all the other CABs (CFAR; CTU; BEAT)</li> <li>• “Connect the Dots” Event</li> </ul>                    | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in CBH/DBH Leadership</li> <li>• Limited resources</li> <li>• Limited opportunities for community base involvement</li> <li>• Representation with Corrections</li> <li>• Not well integrated with CFAR and NCCC</li> </ul>     |
| <p><b>Opportunity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBH/DBH</li> <li>• Change in CBH/DBH Leadership</li> <li>• Strengthen and expand our relationships with city and state agencies</li> <li>• “Connecting the Dots” as a signature event</li> <li>• Making budgetary requests to leadership</li> <li>• Build on the “Connect the Dots”</li> <li>• Solidifying community building by actively recruiting participants of services to the board</li> <li>• Consult on ethics and strategies for community engagement</li> </ul> | <p><b>Threats (challenges)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convincing CBH of the value of the CAB</li> <li>• Cuts to discretionary funding to get re-funded</li> <li>• Political and economic climate</li> <li>• Reducing availability of federal and private grant funding</li> </ul> |

### Goals

Goals for the next 1-3 years:

- *Creating Bridges between the behavioral & HIV communities*
- *Disseminate findings of PMHARC activities to community*
- *Facilitate recruitment of PMHARC studies*
- *Share community ideas and concerns at PMHARC CAB meetings*

- *Encourage the establishment and maintenance of active educational programs*
- *Provide community centered feedback and consultation regarding future PMHARC initiatives*
- *Present “Connect the Dots” annually to the mental health community & HIV/AIDS community*
- *Provide expertise on community ideas to RFA development of grants (i.e., Development Awards, New Investigator Awards, etc.)*
- *Centralizes services and resources for PMHARC CAB*

## **Connecting the Dots**

Connecting the Dots: Understanding the intersection of HIV and mental health, a symposium for frontline workers in behavioral health care.

The CAB created a symposium “Connecting the Dots” that provided frontline mental health and HIV/AIDS providers an opportunity to receive training for CEUs on critical information of common concern among both mental health and HIV/AIDS providers. It promoted the mission of PMHARC which focuses on mental health in HIV/AIDS research (see flyer on page 7). The link to the website including the agenda and speakers can be found at <http://phillyhivresearch.wix.com/connectingthedots>.

The symposium was designed for frontline workers in the mental health field. The aim of the symposium is to increase knowledge of HIV and discuss the significant impact that HIV has on behavioral health. The PMHARC CAB felt that it was important to address how the transmission of HIV infection became intertwined with mental illness and the importance of treating mental illness to improve HIV outcomes. The one day symposium consisted of three panel discussions. They were:

1. HIV Continuum of Care & Medication Adherence
2. Linkage of Mental Health & HIV Care
3. Stigma, Peer Support & the Criminal Justice System

The panel not only discussed those topics, but also addressed the epidemiology of HIV in Philadelphia and the importance of medication adherence, PrEP, the special needs of pregnant women, HCV, and specific issues in the youth and Latino communities.

The conference is designed as a free continuing education course for American Psychological Association (APA) credits and AIDS Activities Coordinating Office (AACO) case management credits. The Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

## **Target Population**

The target population for the symposium is geared toward frontline staff at organizations that provide services to people living with mental health disorders and HIV/AIDS such as; psychologists, counselors, social workers, case managers, nurses, crisis workers, peer support, and people who participate in these services.

These include professionals such as pre-doctoral and post-doctoral trainees, junior and senior faculty and other physicians, in pursuing new research programs focused on outcomes in HIV-infected mentally ill patients.

The goal is to increase knowledge and awareness of HIV and the significant impact it has on behavioral health.

### **Advantage**

By being the only Center in the country that conducts research on the best practices and treatment of mental illness among people living with HIV/AIDS, the CAB is able to look at the concerns of both mental health and HIV/AIDS providers. We are able to solicit feedback from these providers and hopefully help to improve services and inform future research. It also aids in the centralization of services and resources for staff in both fields. An example of this would be the development of a toolkit.

### **Objectives and Action Steps**

Our objective for the next three years is to use “Connecting the Dots” to expand and engage key informants about connecting HIV care and prevention continuum in collaboration with CBH/DBH services and possibly with other organizations within the Philadelphia community. This will be accomplished by using both HIV/AIDS prevention and the CARE systems in developing fundamental processes that will better serve the mental health community of Philadelphia.

The well received and well attended forum will become our signature event which will not only allow the board to disseminate relevant research findings from the broad spectrum of the PMHARC researchers, but also other findings relevant to our target communities. The CAB will become an educational resource among key decision makers, providers and consumers within the mental health and HIV/AIDS communities that come together to learn of common issues and concerns.

### **Financial Strategy**

A large part of the CAB's financial strategy is based on projections, and other information. Part of the CAB's financial strategy is how funding will be used to provide ongoing engagement with the community. This should include identifying funds that will always be in reserve as well as how major expenses will be paid. Reviewing expenses from FY2016 the CAB's expenses were projective to be around of \$17,260:

|                              |         |
|------------------------------|---------|
| Board members travel stipend | \$5,760 |
| Food                         | \$3,000 |
| Projects                     | \$8,500 |

The CAB's projective budget for the coming fiscal year is projective to be around \$22,000 to \$25,000. This projective budget will include the possibility of completing two projects, increasing members to the board and the cost for food.

With financial constraints that should be considered, any future projections are limited to the board. The CAB can with assistance from the PMHARC leadership develop financial opportunities for the CAB to seek and applying for grants, and build collaborations within the University of Pennsylvania community.

The CAB had discussed the possibility of building relationship with pharmaceutical companies, but understanding that certain guidelines restrict their resources.

The CAB may also be able to create an opportunity to seek funding for the training of frontline workers in the mental and HIV/AIDS health communities. This could involve the creation of toolkits and templates for health care facilities and service planning centers. In addition, this

could involve creating seminars that are open to the public and have small subsidized entry fees.

The CAB understands that the financial strategy is a general guide. While some specifics, such as approval authorities should be outlined by PMHARC and the University of Pennsylvania, it is difficult to project possible financial scenarios that may arise. However, this should be enough of a guideline to give a vision of the board's financial aspects.

The Penn Mental Health AIDS Research Center (PMHARC)  
Community Advisory Board cordially invites you to:



# ***Connecting the Dots:*** **Understanding the Intersection of HIV and Mental Health** A Symposium for Front Line workers in Behavioral Health Care

This symposium -- specifically designed for “front line workers” (psychologists, counselors, social workers, case managers, nurses, crisis workers, peer support, and other helpers) – will **increase your knowledge of HIV and explain the significant impact HIV has on behavioral health.**

**Friday, Sept. 30, 2016**  
**8:30 AM– 3:30 PM**

**Community Behavioral Health**  
**801 Market Street, 11<sup>th</sup> floor, Room 1154 A**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19107**

**Admission...FREE** American Psychological Association (APA) Continuing Education  
**Credits...FREE** (This symposium carries 5.75 APA credits\*)

**Lunch...FREE** AACO Case Management Credits...FREE

To register, contact [PBJackson@COMHAR.org](mailto:PBJackson@COMHAR.org) by **Sept. 15, 2016.**

Please visit <http://phillyhivresearch.wix.com/connectingthedots> for more information.

This event is wheelchair accessible.



\* The Department of Psychiatry University of Pennsylvania is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. The Department of Psychiatry University of Pennsylvania maintains responsibility for this program and its content. This symposium carries 5.75credits