

Hepatitis Free Northern New England (Hep Free NNE)
Minutes – April 27, 2023
2023 Steering Committee Meeting #8

Meeting Roles

Bronwyn – facilitator & proj. mgr.

Chloe – monitor chat

Kelly – taskmaster & hands-raised

Minutes recorded by: Bronwyn Barnett

Official start time: 11:01am

I. Housekeeping

- Reviewed meeting roles.
- No objections or revisions to the April 13 minutes.
- Notice that updates are moved to the back of the agenda and discussions to the front.
- Welcomed Anna and Nikki.

II. Questions for Colleen (Poll)

Colleen Flanigan – Director, Bureau of Hepatitis Health Care and Epidemiology at the NYS DOH is joining our next meeting in May. Discussed potential questions and topic areas members would be interested in hearing about.

Questions from the poll

- What type of partnership were they able to establish with NY's Medicaid agency?
How involved was NY Medicaid with these efforts?
- I wonder about any pitfalls that she can share, things they would do differently
- How are they doing with their efforts to date? Are they reducing Hep C Cases and increasing patients getting treated increasing?
- Lessons learned? How long was the process? What was the road map created? How successful was it? What are the gaps? What was the top priorities that gave the best outcome?
- How did you get the rest of the health department on board with the elimination planning?

Questions from the discussion & chat

- Don't ask about talking to pharma companies! NY had no negotiations w/ pharma companies to get the right price. It was done through regular Medicaid negotiations.
- How they brought in individuals with lived experience throughout the process in different ways and ensured they were adequately compensated and represented. Mike S: – we came up with the working group and the health department paid for it. The advocates working with the health department built that working group, reached out to patients from organizations building the coalition, housing works etc., and made sure there was money to do it. Made sure that every committee of ~15 had at least 5 or so PWLE with funds to pay for their time.
- How did you get buy-in from health department leadership when there are so many other competing priorities?
- How things work in their more rural parts of the state? Was the big success in Manhattan – did it translate to small places and how much infrastructure do you need in those more rural areas to be successful?
- Dried Blood Spot (DBS) Testing – how was it prioritized, how much did it cost? NYS has two ways of getting DBS. Their state lab does it but it's only qualitative viral load and working to get it quantitative - there is also a the commercial lab based in Oregon/WA state. In NYS they are giving it

free for sites that already receive their OraQuick rapid tests. They can offer this bc they can do it themselves, while the NNE states don't currently have the capacity in our state labs. Mike – they didn't have it the capacity in their state labs before the elimination plan either. Being mindful of financial resources while also thinking big about what we want. This is the vehicle to create the resources for stuff that is possible.

- How did they increase their budget – get more resources? Role of advocacy.

III. Discussion: Listening Session/Focus Group Script

We are conducting listening sessions/focus groups starting in June/July. The qualitative data from these sessions will be used for the SC to develop the first iteration of Priority Areas and Goals (PAGs). There will be multiple audiences for these sessions – today we are focusing on developing a script for Syringe Service Program (SSP) and Substance Use Treatment Center staff, and people who access their services (priority).

Note about approach: While we are also engaged in a Health Care Systems Assessment around perceived barriers to testing and treatment, we acknowledged early on that health care perceptions matter less than the perceptions and feelings and experiences of those potentially most affected by the disease.

The general concept is for JSI to subcontract with the SSPs/CBOs/treatment centers – providing funds for the orgs to support these sessions and incentives for people who use drugs, people with lived experience, and staff to participate.

What questions related to HCV screening, linkage to cure, and treatment do you have for people who access SSP/SUD treatment services? View the slide deck for question areas we might want to cover.

- Vaccinations
- Treatment adherence
- Does the SSP have ways to store medication and/or directly observe people take their HCV drugs?
- Barriers related to having a phlebotomist on-site: Phlebotomist at SSP – good; using DBS at SSPs - even better. Noted that NYS was doing DBS even though they weren't FDA approved.
- Interested in adding a specific focus on pregnant persons with SUD and hep C
- Linkage - do you prefer to get treatment at your addiction center or are you willing to go to medical or specialist for care?
- How would you design a program if you could do it any way you want?
- Would carceral settings be a convenient place for testing and treatment?
- Perception of risk. We have heard from our SSPs before that many SSP clients 'just assume they have HCV' - either because they have screened positive previously (but not necessarily had diagnostic testing or treatment) or because they know so many people with it. What impacts do these assumptions have on future testing/treatment behaviors for these folk?
- General note that we will have to be sensitive to the competing priorities in peoples' lives – housing, food insecurity, etc. – especially with the PH emergency ending and services being wound down. How do we walk the tightrope of what is within our control and how to make sure we're not minimizing this.

Trying to get at some of the same data related to barriers and methods that help improve ways for people who access SSP/SUD treatment services to get hepatitis C screening, linkage to cure, and HCV treatment - but through a different lens.

- Capacity/bandwidth among SPPs are so limited – it's such a systemic problem that our SPPs don't have the capacity for the basic services we want to provide. It's more than "we're not comfortable to implement testing" – they don't have the time and resources to do it.
- Training is also an issue as is cross-training. Making sure there is a HCV person at every place and that harm reductionists/staff – every person who encounters a client – has basic HCV information, some baseline.
- In what format would on-the-job training be best delivered? Best way to deliver that. NYS/Mike has experience. Pharma can help here too – can provide this training, agnostic of brand so it doesn't



HFNNE Steering Committee Meeting

April 27, 2023

Start time: 11:01am

4/27: Meeting Roles

Bronwyn – facilitator & proj. mgr.

Chloe – monitor chat

Kelly – taskmaster & hands-raised

Official start time: 11:01

Housekeeping (~4 minutes)

- Meeting roles
- Any objections or revisions to the April 13 minutes?
- Thank you for completing the evaluation of last week's meeting
- Changing the format of the meetings
- Welcoming Anna and Nikki

Questions for Colleen (~10 minutes)

Colleen Flanigan – Director, Bureau of Hepatitis Health Care and Epidemiology at the NYS DOH is joining our next meeting in May. She was essential to the NYS strategic planning process and is willing to offer her insight.

*What questions do you have? What information would be helpful to **you** as a Steering Committee member charged with leading this process for Northern New England?*

Poll

Discussion: Listening Session/Focus Group Script (~15 – 30 minutes)

Developing a listening session/focus group script for Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) and Substance Use Disorder program staff and people who access SSP/SUD services.

Poll

Time permitting:

Discussion: Kickoff Summit & First Planning Group Meeting (~15 minutes)

Identify a date and start discussing what we want on the agenda.

Updates (~10 minutes)

- Associations/Conferences
 - Lead: Geoff
- Discovery Committees
 - Lead: Bronwyn

Wrap up (~5 minutes)

- Review action items (Taskmaster)
- Evaluation reminder
- Any Other Business (Parking Lot)

Next meeting: May 11, 2023 @ 11am via ZOOM.

Housekeeping

Please add your name/pronoun/affiliation to the chat.

- Meeting roles
- Any objections or revisions to the April 13 minutes?
- Thank you for completing the evaluation of last week's meeting
- Changing the format of the meetings

Maine Access Points (MAP) is a harm reduction organization, providing syringe access services, overdose prevention education and naloxone distribution, peer support, and advocacy throughout rural Maine.

MAP does this through networks of community distribution and collective organizing.

<https://www.maineaccesspoints.org/>

The logo for Maine Access Points consists of the words "MAINE", "ACCESS", and "POINTS" stacked vertically in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Each word is contained within a white rectangular box that overlaps the one below it. The boxes are arranged in a staggered, overlapping fashion, with "MAINE" on top, "ACCESS" in the middle, and "POINTS" at the bottom. The entire logo is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

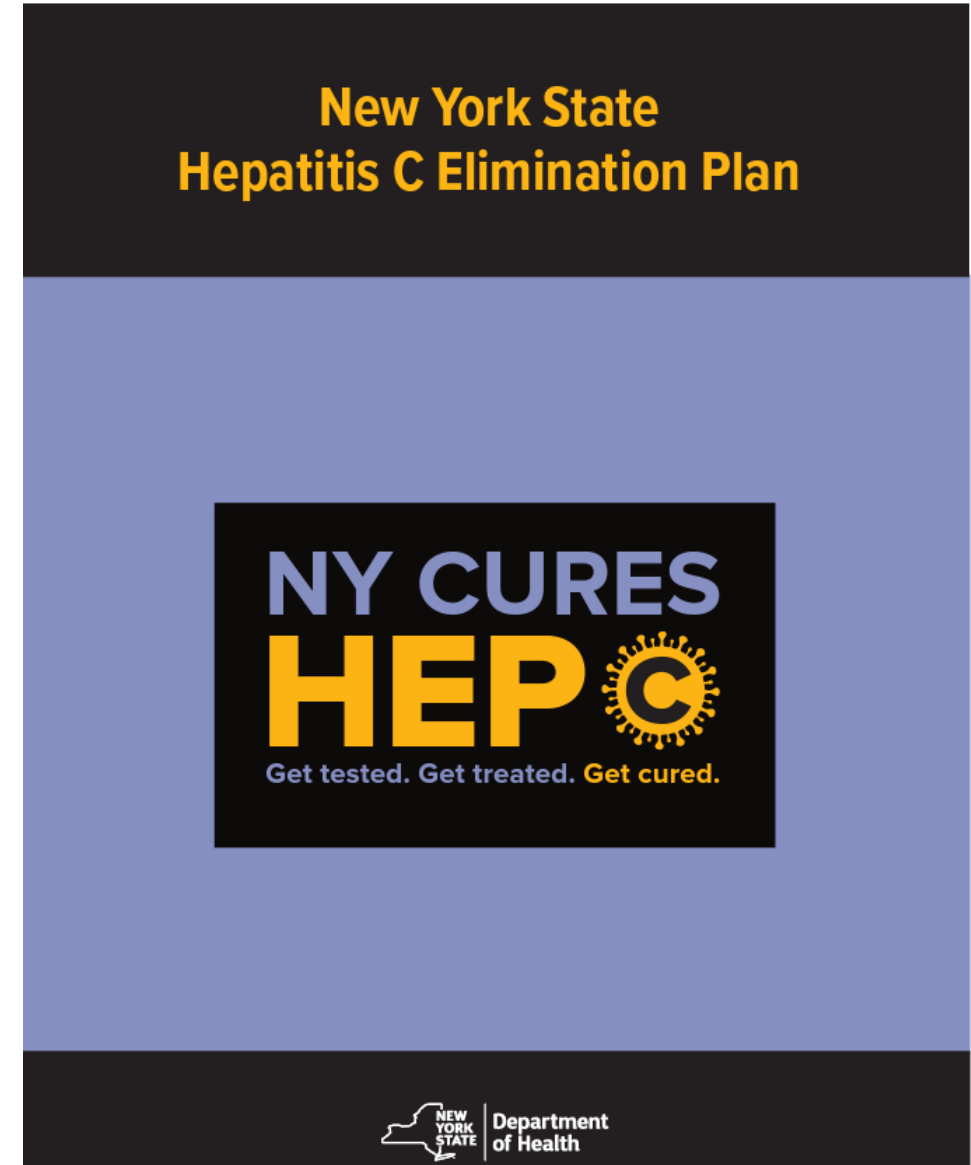
**MAINE
ACCESS
POINTS**

Welcome, Anna and Nikki!

Questions for Colleen


- Director, Bureau of Hepatitis Health Care and Epidemiology at New York State Department of Health
- Responsible for designing, implementing and evaluating NYS public health programs related to hepatitis C prevention, screening, care and treatment as well as viral hepatitis policy and program development.
- She was essential to the NYS strategic planning process and is willing to offer her insight.

[Hep Free NYC](#) | [NYS Hep Elimination Plan](#)





Poll



What do you want to ask Colleen?
What insight would be helpful **to you**
as a Steering Committee member
charged with leading this process for
NNE? *What areas do you want her
to cover during our next meeting?*

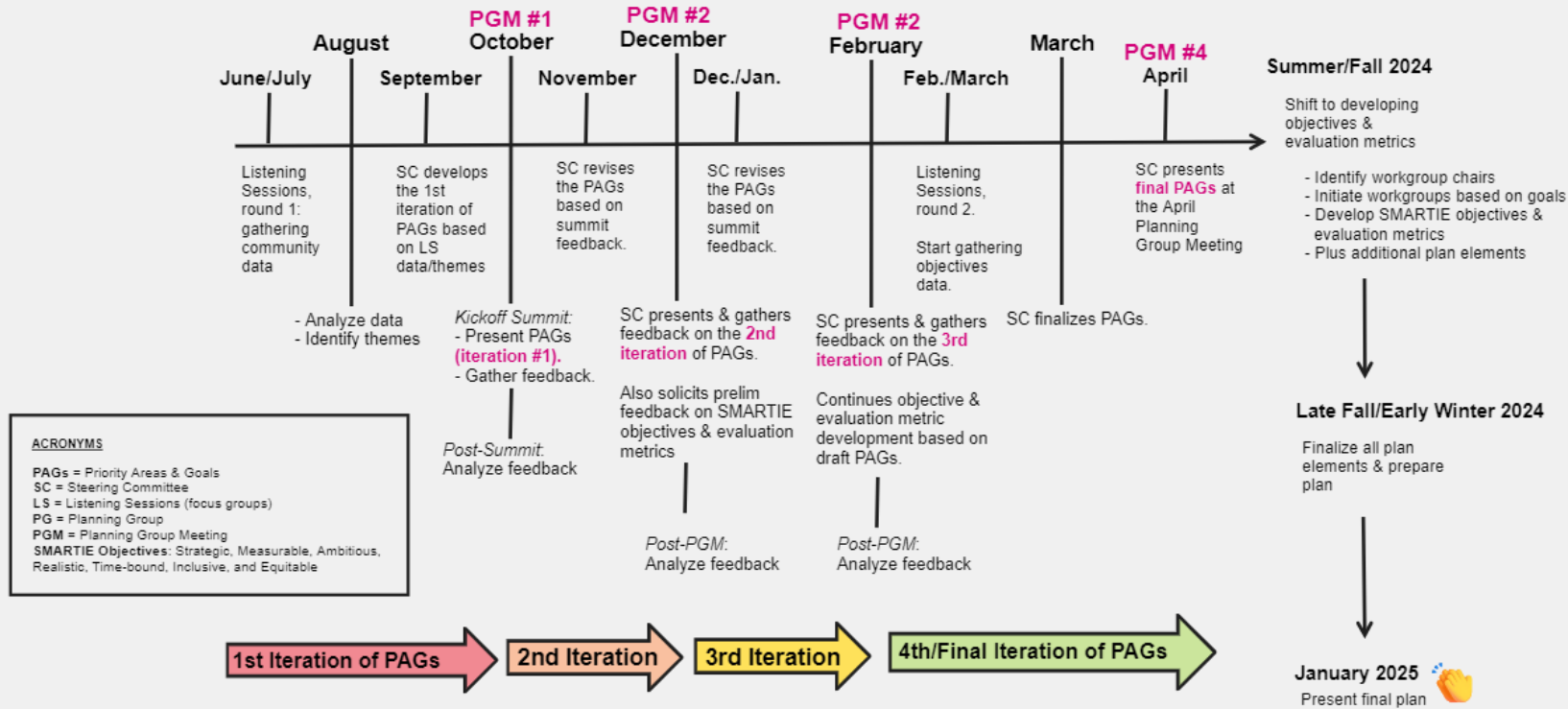
(30ish minutes)

*You can, of course, ask any question when she is here – I'd just like to help her prepare by letting her know the areas everyone is most interested in hearing about.

Preparing for Listening Sessions/Focus Groups

See the living [Timeline document](#) for more information.

HepFreeNNE Timeline: June 2023 - January 2025



Approach

We are focusing right now on developing a script for Syringe Service Program (SSP) and Substance Use Treatment Center staff, **and people who access their services (priority).**

While we are also engaged in a Health Care Systems Assessment around perceived barriers to testing and treatment, we acknowledged early on that **health care perceptions matter less than the perceptions and feelings and experiences of those potentially most affected by the virus.**

That is the approach we are taking.

Listening Session/Focus Group Script

Engaging priority populations in planning and gathering community-level qualitative data that the Steering Committee will use to develop the **first iteration** of draft priority areas & goals.

Listening sessions will be conducted in June/July (ideally).

Focus right now is on developing a script for Syringe Service Program (SSP) and Substance Use Treatment Center staff, and people who access their services.

The concept is to subcontract with the SSPs/CBOs/treatment centers – providing funds for the orgs to support these sessions and incentives for people who use their services as well as their staff to participate.

Discussion & Polls

Audience: People who access the services of Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) and Substance Use Treatment Centers.

What specific questions related to HCV screening, linkage to cure, and treatment do you have for people who access SSP/SUD treatment services? *Knowledge, barriers, strategies, interventions...*

Brainstorming – not assessing, prioritizing, or wordsmithing at this time. No wrong answers.

****Ideally, these questions will be vetted by people w/ lived experience before they are used****

What question "areas" do we want to cover?

- Knowledge of hepatitis, how it is spread/risk factors...
- Priorities? Housing, food, drug use, drug treatment, health, family/children...
- Knowledge of where to get tested locally versus ideal testing settings
- Questions around motivation for testing/treatment
- Questions around barriers to testing/treatment
- Questions around what SSPs/treatment centers can do to overcome barriers
- Questions around current community assets that could be leveraged
- Questions around stigma
- Questions around, "what do you want us [define us] to know?"
-?

Rank poll*

Discussion & Poll

Audience: Syringe Service Program (SSP) and Substance Use Treatment Center staff.

What specific questions related to HCV screening, linkage to cure, and treatment do you have for the **staff** of SSP/SUD treatment programs? *Knowledge, barriers, strategies, interventions...*

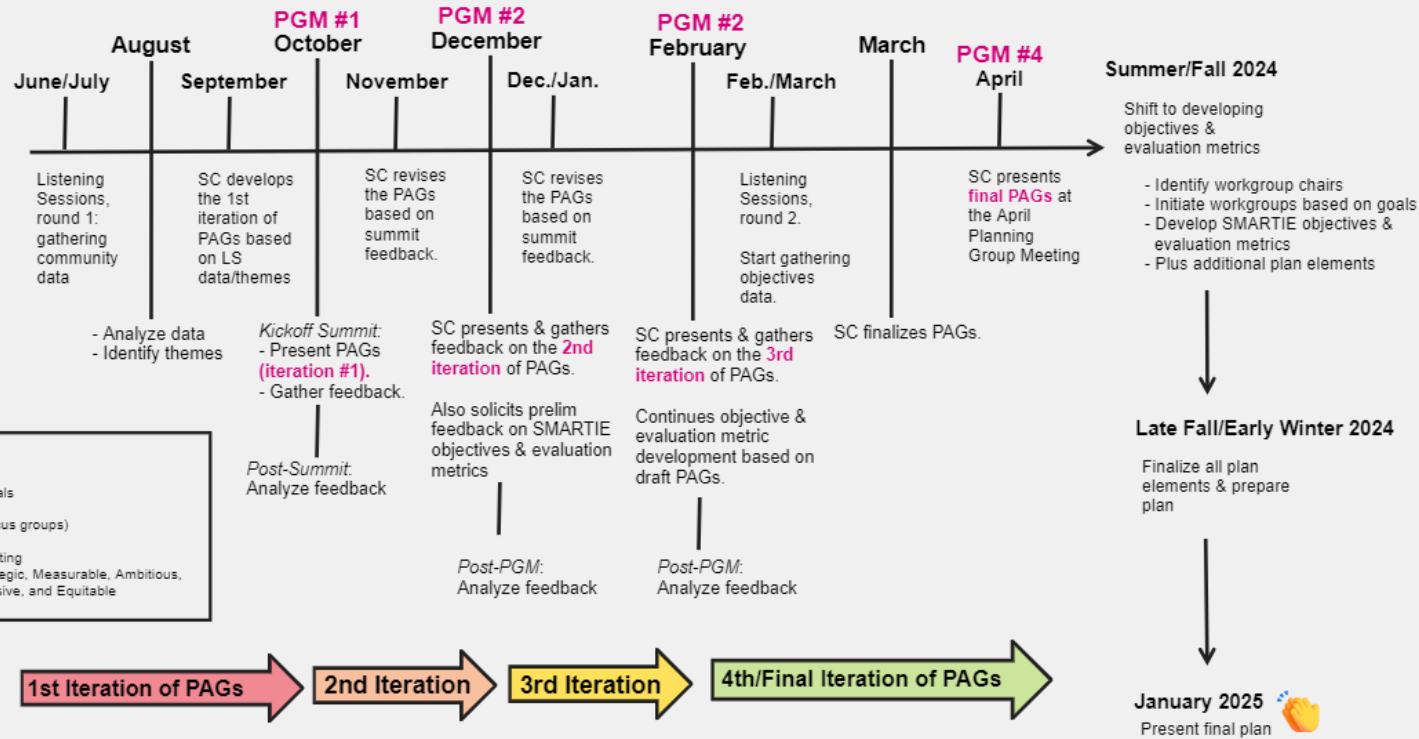
Brainstorming – not assessing, prioritizing, or wordsmithing at this time. No wrong answers.

****Ideally, these questions will be vetted by SSP/treatment center staff before they are used****

What question "areas" do we want to cover?

- Capacity
- Staff knowledge of hepatitis, how it is spread/risk factors and perceptions of their clients' knowledge?
- Knowledge of where clients can get tested locally and perceptions of ideal testing settings
- Perceptions of clients' biggest barriers to testing/treatment?
- Perceptions of how SSPs/treatment centers can overcome barriers
- Perceptions of interventions to increase accessibility to testing/treatment
- Questions around current community assets that could be leveraged
- Questions around perceptions of stigma
- Questions around, "what do you want us [define us] to know?"
-?

HepFreeNNE Timeline: June 2023 - January 2025



Kickoff Summit –
let's pick a tentative
day in October!

Conflicting conferences/events?

- The 2022 National HIV and Hepatitis Technical Assistance Meeting was held on October 11-14 - 2023 date TBD
- ?
- ?
- ?

OCTOBER 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

Kickoff Summit aka the First Planning Group Meeting [Virtual] – Date? How long?

Possible agenda items...

- Introductory remarks
- About HepFreeNNE & a high level overview of the planning process
- Keynote speaker
- Presentation of the situational analysis
- Presentation of the community data relevant to HCV priorities/barriers/opportunities gathered during the first iteration of listening sessions
- Presentation of the **draft** priority areas & goals (developed by the SC) with the caveat that even though the focus areas reflect qualitative data from community listening sessions across all three states, they are not the final version.
- Breakout groups to collect feedback on the first iteration of priority areas & goals
- ???

Reminder: [Stakeholder Spreadsheet!](#)



Updates

- Associations/Conferences
 - Lead: Geoff
- Discovery Committees
 - Lead: Bronwyn



Wrap up

**A. Review action items
(Taskmaster)**

B. Evaluation Reminder

***C. Time Permitting: Any Other
Business (Parking Lot)***

THANK YOU!

Next
meeting:
May 11,
2023