



AIDS FOUNDATION CHICAGO'S
GETTING TO ZERO ILLINOIS

Pathways In Action

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Director's Letter

In 2025, AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC), along with statewide partners, led Illinois forward on the Getting to Zero Illinois Plan 2.0 with a unified statewide focus: improve quality of life for people living with HIV, prevent transmission and diagnose earlier, and ensure treatment through engagement in care. Throughout the year, AFC convened partners, advanced policy and systems change and created accessible spaces for community voices to shape conversation and priorities.

This year, Illinois showed what is possible when community wisdom, provider expertise, and committed leadership move in the same direction. AFC is honored to steward GTZ, and in 2025 we worked alongside partners statewide to deepen engagement, align systems, and remove obstacles to living well with HIV.

We listened, through community conversations and across thirteen tour stops. We convened at a provider summit focused squarely on re-engagement and brought youth and housing providers together. We celebrated at State of Zero, because recognition fuels the next stretch of the journey. And we pushed forward on policy and systems, advancing pharmacist-initiated PrEP and PEP, elevating housing as a strong HIV intervention, and preparing for future systems change work around routine HIV screening.

Thank you to every person who shared a story, every provider who adopted a practice, and every partner who carried this work. Together, we are getting to zero—zero people left out of care, zero preventable transmissions, and zero barriers to living a full, healthy life.

With gratitude,



MEG MCELROY (SHE/HER)

AFC's Director of Special Projects,
Getting to Zero Illinois
gtzillinois.hiv

By the Numbers (2025)

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS:

7 Community Conversations with **over 450** unique attendees.

TRAINING OR EDUCATION EVENTS:

17 training or education events reaching **over 500** individuals, making the pathways and the plan more accessible.

SUMMER TOUR:

13 community events with **180** participants, **15** one on one meetings with community partners, **14** conversations with federal and state elected officials, **2,200** miles traveled.

PROVIDER SUMMIT:

115 people engaged with AFC for our Pathway Three Provider Summit on Best and Promising Practices for Re-Engagement in Care.

STATE OF ZERO CELEBRATION:

5 awards given to individuals and organizations, representing our partners across the state who have led in 2025.

DIGITAL REACH:

10 monthly newsletters published, reaching **over 300** people.

Our success is not just measured in numbers. Strength and depth of our relationships are just as important to measuring progress.

2025 Highlights

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THAT CENTERS LIVED EXPERIENCE

Monthly community conversations created accessible, statewide touchpoints to learn, share, and problem-solve together. Topics included access to PrEP, the unique experiences of youth and those aging at the intersection of HIV, we explored leadership and legacy in the Black community, and LGBTQ folks' contributions in HIV care, prevention and treatment—with real-time questions, resources, and follow-up actions.

STATEWIDE CONVENING THAT MOVES PRACTICE

Summer Tour (August 2025)

AFC staff embarked on a 13-stop, statewide tour (Springfield, Carbondale, Metro East, Effingham, Decatur, Champaign-Urbana, Peoria, Quad Cities, Rockford, Aurora, Joliet, Lake County- Waukegan, and Kankakee) designed to listen first and elevate local priorities. Each stop blended partner meetings, elected official conversations, and a community event with food, tabling, a brief GTZ overview, and a dot-voting exercise to surface what matters most locally.

Provider Summit: Connecting Communities to Care (October 2025)

AFC led a statewide summit focused on re-engagement in care within the Treat pathway. Multidisciplinary providers examined 5 best & promising practices, exchanged tools, and built referral relationships that shorten the distance between community and care.

State of Zero: Progress & Partnership Celebration (November 2025)

AFC and statewide partners gathered to recognize community champions, provider excellence, and local innovations that accelerate GTZ outcomes.

POLICY & SYSTEMS THAT REMOVE BARRIERS

Pharmacist-Initiated PrEP and PEP: Built a Medicaid-ready workflow and pilot plan with coalition partners to support same-day access.

Supportive Housing as an HIV-Intervention: Elevated housing policy and practice throughout 2025 convenings, aligning with AFC's broader housing leadership to stabilize care and reduce vulnerability.

HIV Infrastructure: Continued advocacy efforts to maintain and expand HIV care, treatment and prevention across the state. AFC staff utilized relationships with policy makers and decision makers throughout the state to stress the importance of continued investment in the HIV infrastructure which supports those living with and vulnerable to HIV in Illinois.



Pathways in Action

PATHWAY 1 — IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE

AFC worked with the GTZ Housing Committee to assess the state of HIV housing and housing needs across the state. AFC led advocacy efforts to increase state investment in the permanent supportive housing model. In the summer, housing service providers and youth service providers convened at AFC to de-silo and discuss the unique needs facing young people at the intersection of HIV and housing. AFC, statewide partners, and community members across Illinois discussed housing as an HIV intervention and housing as prevention on the GTZ Summer Tour.

PATHWAY 2 — PREVENT & DIAGNOSE

AFC focused on two key elements of prevention and diagnosis over the course of 2025: testing and PrEP access. This involved research into the current state of routine HIV screening. AFC explored current law and insurance code to best understand any barriers or facilitators to this practice and explored successful models nationwide. Staff compiled research on current funding models and potential sustainable funding streams. AFC staff traveled across the state to discuss the practice of routine testing with health department partners, providers, and community members.

AFC continued to advance the implementation of Pharmacist-Initiated PrEP and PEP. AFC continued to convene a working group of pharmacists, health department partners, academic and research partners, along with community members to support implementation. In April 2025, the Illinois Department of Public Health issued a statewide standing order to support Pharmacist-Initiated PrEP. AFC continues to work with the coalition to create a checklist for pharmacies and pharmacists interested in implementation, and to identify pilot sites for individuals utilizing Medicaid for this service. Many community members across the state informed this work, identifying steps to increase access and decrease stigma for people across the state to access life-saving prevention medications.

PATHWAY 3 — TREAT

Throughout 2025, AFC engaged community members in discussions around re-engagement in care as the focus of the Treat Pathway. AFC convened leading researchers and practitioners to discuss evidence-based best and promising practices in re-engagement, rooted in research and pulled from national and global efforts to end the HIV epidemic. From there, AFC engaged the broad GTZ community, including folks with lived experience and providers, to narrow the practices to a concise top five which later informed the multi-disciplinary provider summit. At the summit, members of the HIV workforce and community members were able to learn about each best practice and how it is being implemented in Illinois and discuss challenges and opportunities for each. Alongside this work, AFC compiled a training and education repository for providers about co-occurring conditions and referral guidance.

LOOKING AHEAD

Advocacy Leadership Institute (Oct 2025–March 2026): AFC welcomes 15 seasoned advocates to prepare to learn and lead, culminating at HIV Advocacy Day 2026.

Voices of Zero Storytelling Event (Spring 2026): Statewide in-person event in Springfield to center lived experience in guiding practice and policy.

Ongoing over 2026: Community conversations, technical assistance, policy advancement, supporting Pharmacist-Initiated PrEP and PEP, exploring next steps for routine testing, insurance enrollment and access, and reducing HIV stigma.

AFC will continue to monitor and respond to threats from the Trump Administration in 2026. Illinois expects to see cuts to Medicaid and expiration of ACA tax credits which will likely dramatically reduce access to insurance, strain our safety net and HIV infrastructure, and dramatically impact people's ability to access life-saving health care and services.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With gratitude to community members, statewide partners, the Community Advisory Board, funders, and our health department partners including our co-leaders at the Illinois and Chicago Departments of Public Health, who make this work possible. AIDS

Foundation Chicago is honored to be a leading steward of Getting to Zero Illinois and to advance health equity across Illinois — **together.**

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER FOR UPDATES TO:

Join partner calls • Attend conversations
Share your story • Advocate with us



gtzillinois.hiv/newsletter



**GETTING
TO ZERO
ILLINOIS**



**AIDS
FOUNDATION
CHICAGO**