

July 22, 2015

From: Dr. Bruce Agins, Dr. Lawrence Eisenstein & Dr. James Tomarken
To: Long Island HIV Care and Supportive Services Leaders, Providers & Community Members
Subject: INVITATION – New York Links Long Island Regional Group

Dear Long Island HIV Care and Supportive Services Leader,

Over the past year, New York State has made history as the first state to develop a Blueprint focused on Ending the Epidemic (ETE) by the end of 2020, an initiative led by a Taskforce assembled by Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration. We are pleased to invite you to join the **New York Links Long Island Regional Group** in support of the ETE goals. **New York Links** is a statewide initiative that focuses on using data and quality improvement methods to effect positive change in linkage to care, retention in care and viral load suppression for all HIV positive individuals living within specific geographic regions. As a leader in HIV primary care, supportive services, and/or the community, we are offering *a unique opportunity to focus on systems improvement at a community level*. We believe expansion of this initiative into the Long Island region will lead to improved health outcomes for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties while also achieving a significant public health benefit by reducing HIV transmission.

We are eager to begin implementation of this initiative in Long Island, New York and hope that you will participate in partnership with us as a key stakeholder in this important initiative.

The specific aim of the **NY Links** initiative is to bridge systemic gaps within HIV care and achieve better outcomes for PLWHA through improved systems for monitoring, recording, and accessing information about HIV care in NYS. By implementing a regional approach to improving linkage to care, retention in care, and viral load suppression, coupled with quality improvement activities conducted within individual organizations, we can support efforts in Long Island to ensure PLWHA are receiving the best quality of care. The use of regional cascades will allow for local prioritization that impacts the statewide cascade of care. **NY Links** is implementing statewide quality improvement regional groups, composed of HIV primary care and supportive services providers and community members who gather to form a learning environment in which systemic collaboration and linkage innovations can be tested and measured. The current NYS regional groups that convene are in Upper Manhattan, Western New York, Mid- and Lower-Hudson Valley, and Queens/Staten Island.

The mission of **NY Links** is to improve linkage to care, retention in care, and viral load suppression rates through enhanced quality improvement activities across the care continuum, strengthening collaboration among providers and community members, conducting technical assistance and capacity building activities, and fostering an environment for peer learning. This regional group will include clinical providers, supportive service providers, and community members living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. By joining your colleagues and community members, you will have the opportunity to participate in an innovative, synergistic approach to quality improvement. The initiative will also be using regionally specific epidemiologic data to drive improvement work.

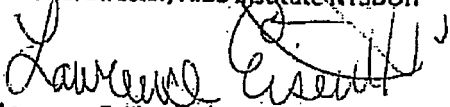
In the coming weeks, you will be contacted by AIDS Institute staff and quality improvement faculty to understand your goals for participating in the regional group, and the anticipated benefits of participating in an initiative of this kind. You are invited to join us for the **NY Links Long Island Regional Group** kick-off meeting on **Monday, August 24th from 9:30am-3:30pm** at the United Way of Long Island, 819 Grand Blvd, Deer Park, NY 11729. We intend on hosting an **Introduction & Welcome to NY Links Webinar** to kick-off the Long Island Regional group on **Monday, August 10th from 10:00am-12:00pm**. More details will follow for both events.

We look forward to your participation in the **New York Links Long Island Regional Group**. Your leadership and input is essential to the success of this initiative and to Ending the Epidemic by 2020 in NYS! For more information, please visit our website at www.newyorklinks.org. If you have any questions about participating in the Long Island Regional Group, please contact Stephen Crowe at stephen.crowe@health.ny.gov or 212-417-4558.

Sincerely,



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Lawrence E. Eisenstein, MD, FACP
Commissioner, Nassau County Department of Health



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Commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Health