



# Ending the Syndemic (ETS) Committee Meeting Summary 17 May 2023



|                   |                 |                     |               |                  |           |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------|
| <b>Date:</b>      | 17 May 2023     | <b>Start Time:</b>  | 12:30 p.m.    | <b>End Time:</b> | 1:49 p.m. |
| <b>Chair:</b>     | Roberta Stewart | <b>DPH Liaison:</b> | Gina D'Angelo | <b>Location:</b> | Zoom      |
| <b>Attendees:</b> | Refer to page 6 | <b>Recorder:</b>    | Mark Nickel   |                  |           |

## RESULTS

1. The committee members approved by consensus the March committee meeting summary.
2. The committee chair did a progress check on planned v. actual performance as it relates to the committee's 2023 Work Plan. The Committee work remains on schedule.
3. Representatives of the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) Syndemic Partners Group shared updates on current and future areas of focus related to the committee.
4. The committee provided feedback on draft content from the routine HIV testing toolkit and a draft of the syndemic screener tool.

## ACTION ITEMS

- Mark Nickel will draft a meeting summary. Participants will review the draft meeting summary and provide any additions or corrections.
- Gina D'Angelo will connect with the marketing campaign and monitor progress on the development of draft products for the routine HIV testing toolkit.
- Gina D'Angelo will engage the Syndemic Partners Group to get feedback on the next iteration of the syndemic screener tool.
- The committee will assemble in June. Marcelin Joseph will share more findings from his syndemic data collection project.

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## CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Committee chair Roberta Stewart called to order the meeting at 12:30 p.m. She introduced Gina D'Angelo, the CT DPH resource liaison and subject matter expert who provides technical assistance to the committee.

Ms. Stewart briefly described the charge of the committee to support the development, adoption, and scaling of prevention and care strategies relevant to ending the HIV epidemic and other related epidemics of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), Hepatitis (Hep), and substance use disorders (SUDs). Participants shared their names and their organizational affiliation or town or residence.

Participants shared their names, preferred pronouns, and affiliation with an organization or community.

## CONSENSUS APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING SUMMARY

The committee members approved by consensus the April meeting summary with no additions or corrections.

## UPDATES FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR AND PROGRESS CHECK OF 2023 WORK PLAN

Ms. Stewart stated that she did not have any committee chair updates.



## COORDINATING ENDING THE HIV EPIDEMIC ACTIVITIES

### CT DPH Update

Ms. D'Angelo shared that the CT DPH Commissioner holds an infectious disease background and is highly aware of the CT DPH efforts to implement a syndemic approach.

- Ms. D'Angelo reported that the Syndemic Partners Group will meet later this month and provide the next round of feedback on the syndemic screener tool.
- Marcelin Joseph reported some preliminary results on a special study that involves collecting data on syndemic activities in the original five (5) Getting to Zero cities. A full set of results will be shared with the committee at a future meeting. Mr. Joseph shared some early observations:
  - Organizational stigma between HIV service organizations and other organizations appears to affect the level of partnering with HIV organizations.
  - No baseline exists in terms of the use of a status neutral approach. Many organizations indicate that they use a status neutral model. It appears this differs by site and even by individual within an organization.
- Danielle Warren Dias shared experience about working with an initiative called "Uplifting Black Motherhood" where a similar organizational stigma appeared and even surprise existed when suggestions were made to hold community discussions on topics related to sexual health.

### Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Ms. D'Angelo reported that the Connecticut Sexual Health Coalition will meet in person on 25 May 2023 in Hartford. The group is developing a statewide strategic plan. The plan will use a syndemic approach. Ms. D'Angelo is participating in the process.

### Hepatitis

Ms. D'Angelo reported May 19<sup>th</sup> will include coordinated statewide Hepatitis testing day activities.

### CIRA

Dr. LaRon Nelson stated that CIRA had received notice of its five-year AIDS Research Center renewal award (5-years). CIRA will be placing more emphasis on contributing to statewide and local efforts including identifying areas to share subject matter expertise with the CHPC and/or its partners as it relates to the Statewide HIV Plan.

### Substance Use Disorders and Mental Health

No update was shared.

## 2023 COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The committee members reviewed a screen share of the 2023 Work Plan and recognized that the committee remains on schedule. The 2023 Work Plan references the development of short videos (by subject matter experts / healthcare providers). This work has been tabled until after the content of the routine HIV toolkit has been finalized.

## ROUTINE HIV TESTING TOOLKIT DEVELOPMENT

Ms. D'Angelo shared some draft content from the marketing contractors working on developing the routine HIV testing toolkit.

- The health provider toolkit package will include a 9" x 12" pocket folder with two (2) trifold brochures, one

(1) 12-page information booklet, and three (3) to five (2) double-sided, one-sheet flyers.

- The folder will include a letter from the CT DPH Commissioner.
- The information will be made available to over 17,000 diverse providers across the state.

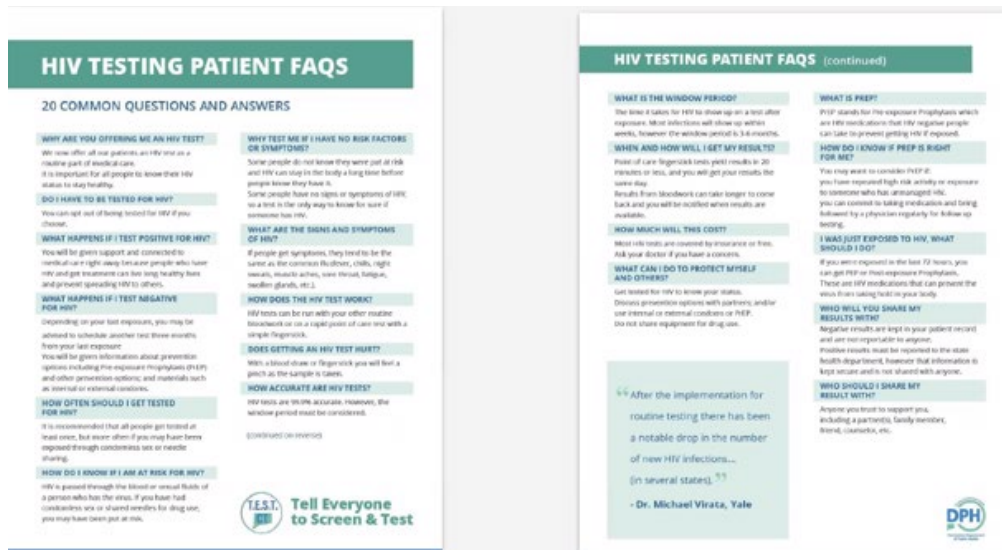
Ms. D'Angelo shared several screen shots of mock-up materials and asked participants for initial impressions and suggestions.

- In general, participants thought the product was developing nicely.

Participants offered these suggestions about the cover page:

- Use fewer words or remove words on the bottom (blue box).
- Use a picture of a Black or Brown provider on the cover (perhaps one that is used later in the documents).
- Spell out the words to introduce the acronym.
- Is it necessary to have the acronym and the logo with the acronym; could be an option to save space or re-size images.
- Consider adding some type of message that "routine HIV testing is now the law" to create a sense of urgency.

Ms. D'Angelo shared screen shots of sample content for 2 to 3 pages. Participants made these suggestions and observations:



- Consider adding some pictures of older patients.
- A suggestion was made to use a quote such as, "I'm healthier because I know my HIV status." Ms. Warren Dias stated that she would offer to have her picture appear with this quote.
- Consider adding a QR code that allows providers to access materials; this is especially important for

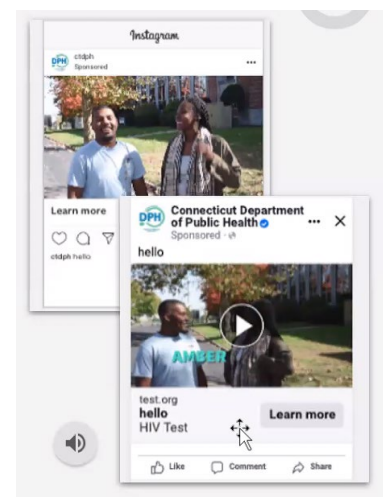
“paperless” office environments; the QR code will also allow CT DPH to track clicks.

- Several suggestions were made about the Frequently Asked Questions content:
  - Consider making some of the words bold or grouping the questions by thematic area.
  - Participants wondered if the FAQ section contained too many words and should somehow contain some visualizations or perhaps even combine questions.
  - A suggestion was made to rename at least a cluster of the questions to “Questions your patients might ask.”
  - If this is provider focused, then it is practical to use more technical language (except in areas where patient interactions will be occurring).

Other suggestions or observations:

- Participants asked about the inclusion of more provider case studies. Ms. D’Angelo stated that the group had started a process to do provider interviews. The person from the ETS Committee that started that process had a family medical emergency and that process was delayed.
- A suggestion was made to hold a brief discussion group with providers to understand better how they would use the materials. This would allow CT DPH to understand better how to support the process or make certain documents more prominent or accessible on websites.
- Some discussion occurred about testing the color schemes. Ms. D’Angelo stated that the color schemes reflect CT DPH branding.
- Ms. D’Angelo confirmed that other content will include information on billing codes and the history of HIV testing and laws in Connecticut.

Ms. D’Angelo showed how the provider toolkit will fit into a general wrap-around public awareness campaign for providers and for residents. The approach will be to allow providers to add their logs to the information and share this widely in their communities across multiple channels (e.g., traditional media, social media, flyers).





## **SYNDEMIC SCREENING**

Ms. Stewart explained that the Statewide HIV Plan calls for the development of a syndemic screening tool to ensure that patients are asked about STDs, HIV, Hepatitis, substance misuse, and mental health.

Participants reviewed the latest version of the screener and were asked to share any suggestions or improvements. The participants offered the following comments.

- Could this be used as part of the routine testing process with the backside used as basic intake and demographics? Ms. D'Angelo stated at this point the screener would be a guide for enhancing existing approaches to be more comprehensive.
- Some folks wondered how providers might incorporate this into their practices. For example, could this be handed out in the waiting room. Could this be included in pre-screening questions. Ms. D'Angelo said any of these options would work and it would be up to each practice or healthcare system to determine how best to enhance their process.
- Danielle Warren Dias encouraged the group to frame this a "recommended" questions to ask.
- The group thought the questions could be simplified even more. However, they wanted the Syndemic Partner Group to see the full set of questions. For example, a core question is repetitive such as the one related to sex without protection.
- These questions could also be included in the patient resources to help empower them and to understand that their providers should be asking these types of questions.
- Participants shared that all providers should be asking these screener questions if they are providing primary care services or are considered the patient's family physician.
- A suggestion was made to enhance outreach to OBGYN providers given the rise in congenital STDs.

Ms. Stewart and Ms. D'Angelo thanked everyone for sharing their impressions, insights, and suggestions.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

No participants introduced new or other business.

## **NEXT STEPS / MEETING FEEDBACK**

Ms. D'Angelo will share feedback about the toolkit with the marketing contractor and feedback about the syndemic screener with the Syndemic Partners Group.

Participants felt the meeting was productive and valued the opportunity to provide feedback.

## **ADJOURN**

Ms. Stewart adjourned the meeting at 1:49 p.m.



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## ETS COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE

| <b>CHPC Members</b>        | <b>1/18</b> | <b>2/15</b> | <b>3/15</b> | <b>4/19</b> | <b>5/17</b> |  |  |  |  |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--|--|--|--|
| Gigi Chaux                 | x           | x           |             |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Natalie DuMont             | x           | x           | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Evette Ellis               |             |             |             | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Stephen Feathers           |             |             | x           | x           | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Nilda Fernandez            | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Dante Gennaro              | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Blaise Gilchrist           | x           |             |             | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Marcelin Joseph            | x           | x           | x           |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Reggie Knox                | x           | x           | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Norma Little               | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Roberta Stewart            | x           | x           | x           | x           | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Rebecca O'Brien            | x           | x           | x           |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Marie Raynor               | x           | x           | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Angel Ruiz                 | x           |             | x           |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Mary Tanner                | x           | x           | x           | x           | x           |  |  |  |  |
| CHPC Member #              | <b>13</b>   | <b>8</b>    | <b>9</b>    | <b>8</b>    | <b>6</b>    |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Public Participants</b> | <b>1/18</b> | <b>2/15</b> | <b>3/15</b> | <b>4/19</b> | <b>5/17</b> |  |  |  |  |
| Anna Andreozzi             |             |             |             |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Amy Clark                  |             |             |             | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Daniel Davidson            | x           | x           |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Maria Diaz                 |             |             |             | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Gina D'Angelo              | x           | x           | x           | x           | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Sam Bowens                 |             | x           | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Jean Brown                 |             |             | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Michel Daud                |             | x           |             |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| AC Demidont                | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Linda Ferraro              | x           |             | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Alex Garbera               | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Ruth Garcia                | x           | x           | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Miguel Gonzalez            |             |             |             |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Shavon Gordon              | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Venesha Heron              | x           | x           | x           | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Anne Hollister             |             |             |             |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Neena A Jacob              | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Doug Janssen               | x           | x           |             | x           |             |  |  |  |  |
| Michael Judd               | x           | x           |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Dr. Anne Kohler            | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Norman Lebron              |             | x           |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Maria Lorez                | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Susan Major                |             |             | x           |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Mieykeya McClendon         | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Pedro Mendez               | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Kelley Moore               | x           | x           |             | x           | x           |  |  |  |  |
| LaRon Nelson               |             |             |             |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Nathanial Parril           | x           |             |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Josh Rozovsky              |             | x           |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Filomena Sgambato          |             |             |             | x           | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Jenn Vargas                | x           | x           | x           |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Melinda Vazquez-Yopp       | x           | x           |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Lisbeth Vasquez            | x           | x           |             |             |             |  |  |  |  |
| Danielle Warren Diaz       | x           |             | x           |             | x           |  |  |  |  |
| Public Participant #       | <b>21</b>   | <b>14</b>   | <b>9</b>    | <b>11</b>   | <b>11</b>   |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Total Attendance</b>    | <b>34</b>   | <b>22</b>   | <b>18</b>   | <b>19</b>   | <b>17</b>   |  |  |  |  |

## SYNDEMIC SCREENER (DRAFT)

| <b>HIV</b>   |                                   |                                   |                                      |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Have you ever been tested for HIV?</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| 1b. <b>IF YES</b> , when was the last time you were tested for HIV?  | (enter year)                      |                                   |                                      |
| 1c. <b>IF YES</b> , What were the HIV test results?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>2. Since your last HIV test, have you had sex without a condom or protection?</b>                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                      |
| 2b. <b>IF YES</b> , Do you know whether your partner was HIV+ ?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| 2c. <b>IF YES</b> , Do you know whether your partner was sharing needles or works to take drugs?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>3. Would you like an HIV test or a referral for PrEP or treatment?</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                      |
| <b>STD/STI</b>   |                                   |                                   |                                      |
| <b>1. Have you ever had Gonorrhea, Chlamydia, Syphilis, Herpes, HPV, Genital Warts, Hepatitis B, or mPox?</b>            | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| 1b. <b>IF YES</b> , are you currently or did you receive medical treatment?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>2. Since your last STI/STD test, have you had sex without a condom or protection?</b>                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                      |
| 2b. <b>IF YES</b> , Do you know whether your partner was HIV+ ?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| 2c. <b>IF YES</b> , Do you know whether your partner was sharing needles or works to take drugs?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>3. Would you like an STD test or a referral for PrEP or treatment?</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                      |
| <b>HEPATITIS C</b>   |                                   |                                   |                                      |
| <b>1. Have you ever been tested for Hepatitis C?</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| 1b. <b>IF YES</b> , when was the last time you were tested for Hep C?  | (enter year)                      |                                   |                                      |
| 1c. <b>IF YES</b> , What were the Hep C test results?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Positive | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>2. Since your last Hep C test, have you had sex without a condom or protection?</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                      |
| 2b. <b>IF YES</b> , Do you know whether your partner was HIV+ ?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| 2c. <b>IF YES</b> , Do you know whether your partner was sharing needles or works to take drugs?                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>3. Would you like a Hep C test or a referral for PrEP?</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                      |
| <b>SUBSTANCE USE / MENTAL HEALTH</b>   |                                   |                                   |                                      |
| <b>1. In the past 30 days have you been concerned about your substance use (getting high or drunk)?</b>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>2. In the past 30 days have you had concerns about your mental health like anxiety, depression, or anything else?</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>3. In the past 30 days has anyone else you know expressed concerns about your substance use or mood?</b>              | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not know |
| <b>4. Would you like to talk to someone about how you are feeling or about your substance use?</b>                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      | <input type="checkbox"/> No       |                                      |

| Work Plan Activity and Milestones Over Time  | Month 2023 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|--|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|  | Jan        | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| <b>General Committee Management</b>  |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Approve meeting summary  | x          | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   |     |     |
| Updates from partners or collaborators   | x          | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   | x   |     |     |
| <b>1. Develop content enhancements for routine HIV testing materials used in the provider tool kit</b>                       | Jan        | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| Receive update on current tool kit resources   | x          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Generate FAQs and response (customer journey map)  | x          | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Identify provider interview list   | x          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Conduct interviews with providers and draft scenarios  |            | x   | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Finalize FAQ and provider scenarios  |            |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Share content with CTDPH marketing contractor for packaging  |            |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>2. Develop “how to” videos to support routine HIV testing and implementation of status neutral model by practitioners</b> | Jan        | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| Develop / confirm list of priority topics / titles   | x          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Identify best practices, content, or individuals who can provide subject matter expertise                                    |            | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Discuss core messaging for use in scripts  |            | x   | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Finalize scripts   |            |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Transfer scripts to partner for video production   |            |     |     | x   | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Review videos and provide any feedback for editing   |            |     |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| <b>3. Develop brief screening tool that addresses all syndemic areas of focus</b>  | Jan        | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| CTDPH alerts and engages Syndemic Partner Group and coordinates involvement  | x          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| ETS participants requested to submit “best screening questions” by e-mail  |            | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| ETS reviews list of best questions and identifies top questions  |            |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Develop and review draft screener  |            |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Pilot draft screener at up to three CTDPH funded prevention sites  |            |     |     |     | x   | x   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Review feedback from pilot process and adjust screener   |            |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |
| Develop recommendations to scale use of screener   |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |     |
| <b>4. Develop PrEP-specific content enhancements to provider tool kit to support prevention and status neutral model</b>     | Jan        | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| Receive update on current tool kit resources   |            |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |
| Generate FAQs and response   |            |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |
| Identify provider interview list   |            |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |
| Conduct interviews with providers and draft scenarios  |            |     |     |     |     |     |     | x   | x   |     |     |     |
| Finalize FAQ and provider scenarios  |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |
| Identify priority topics for “how to videos”   |            |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |     |     |     |
| Develop core messaging for use in scripts (includes ETS discussions, interviews with experts)                                |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | x   | x   |     |     |
| Finalize scripts   |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |     |
| Transfer scripts to partner for video production   |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | x   |     |
| Share content with CTDPH for inclusion in tool kits  |            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | x   |