Getting to Zero Illinois (GTZ-IL) is a state-wide initiative to end the HIV epidemic in the state by 2030. Through partnerships with people living with HIV, community-based organizations, health care providers, government agencies and other statewide stakeholders, we can dramatically shift HIV in Illinois. AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC) and the Illinois and Chicago Departments of Health coordinate the Getting to Zero Illinois project along with 60 statewide community partners.

INTRODUCTION

2021 was a year of exciting, life-changing wins for Getting to Zero Illinois (GTZ-IL) and also challenges. We are proud to continue the work to end the HIV epidemic by 2030 no matter what obstacles arise. Looking forward, in addition to increasing our focus on legislative work and continuing our Community Grantee program, we have selected the following focus areas for 2022: Housing, Rapid Start, and Reentry. We are confident that with the vast array of expertise in these areas across our network we will work together to fill in gaps through advocacy, educational events and more that will have a lasting impact on the HIV landscape in Illinois. We will also focus our community engagement efforts largely on building stronger relationships in areas outside of Chicago, starting with focused recruitment of community board members in rural areas.

WHO WE ARE

Getting to Zero Illinois (GTZ-IL) is a state-wide initiative to end the HIV epidemic in the state by 2030. Through partnerships with people living with HIV, community-based organizations, health care providers, government agencies and other statewide stakeholders, we can dramatically shift HIV in Illinois. AIDS Foundation Chicago (AFC) and the Illinois and Chicago Departments of Health coordinate the Getting to Zero Illinois project along with 60 statewide community partners.
We believe that GTZ-IL belongs to the community. Through big and small transfers of power, we work to ensure that those most impacted by the HIV epidemic are at the decision-making table. That’s why in 2021, we established our first Community Advisory Board (CAB) to help lead implementation of the plan. The CAB spent the year getting to know each other, learning our strengths and interests, and setting a foundation that will allow all members to grow as leaders for years to come.

**COMMUNITY BOARD**

In 2021, GTZ-IL launched the project’s first dashboard ([dashboard.gtzillinois.hiv](dashboard.gtzillinois.hiv)), a data tool that allows us to measure our progress towards getting to zero. Combining and displaying publicly available data from the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the dashboard allows partners, providers, advocates and others to find specific information and visualizations on the HIV Care Continuum and Social Determinants of Health throughout the state. The dashboard was designed by Northwestern University in collaboration with AFC, CDPH, IDPH, the Getting to Zero Research Evaluation and Data Workgroup (GTZ RED), and GTZ-IL’s Communications Workgroup.

**GTZ DASHBOARD**

In 2021, GTZ-IL launched its first Community Grant Program, a pool of grants totaling $350,000. Fourteen organizations across Illinois received one-time grants of up to $30,000 each for new projects that will help the state get to zero. The grants support the development of several innovative projects aligned with GTZ-IL strategies including: a support group for caregivers of youth living with HIV, the creation of an anonymous and confidential hotline for Black gay and bisexual men who use methamphetamine and increased mobile HIV testing.

**GTZ-IL COMMUNITY GRANT**
The AFC 2021 Advocacy Week had a day dedicated to advancing the goals of GTZ-IL. GTZ-IL Day was spent discussing, learning and showing how policy actions can be used to move us closer to zero new HIV transmissions. The need for progressive public policy was continuously brought up in conversations and events we had with our partner organizations and individuals with many saying macro-level change was the only way to end the HIV epidemic.

In July 2021, Governor Pritzker signed House Bill 1063, a bill to Repeal HIV Criminalization. This legislation lifts the state’s Criminal Transmission of HIV statute which criminalized and stigmatized people living with HIV. Illinois became the second state to fully repeal its HIV criminalization statute. Passage of HB1063 fulfills GTZ-IL Goal 16, Strategy 57 in the plan: Reduce HIV-related stigma and the negative impact of HIV criminalization by examining state legislation that currently criminalizes HIV exposure and transmission.

In August 2021, Governor Pritzker signed Senate Bill 818, the Keeping Youth Safe & Healthy Act. This law creates personal health and safety standards for grades K-5 and updates and expands comprehensive sexual health education standards in grades 6-12. This legislation supports young people’s health and well-being. SB818 is in service of GTZ-IL Goal 16, Strategy 54 in the plan: Ensure all public schools across Illinois provide comprehensive, evidence-based sexual health education and services, including appropriate discussion of all sexual and gender identities and behaviors.
INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED?

Visit gtzillinois.hiv to join our email list or partner network, discover the GTZ-IL Dashboard and learn more about the initiative and plan.