

This fall, PATF will be getting a new name!



PATF e-Perspectives

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What's in a name? Apparently a lot!

When Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force (PATF) was started by a group of volunteers more than 30 years ago, HIV/AIDS had only been recently discovered and effective treatment was more than 10 years away. PATF began as an organization largely dedicated to helping people with AIDS die with dignity, fighting discrimination and to disseminating up-to-date factual information on HIV/AIDS.



As treatment for HIV advanced and changed, so too did PATF. We greatly

expanded our social services, conducted more community outreach and educational programming, and added free STI and Hepatitis C testing to our existing HIV screening program. Just in the last year-and-a-half, we renovated nearly half our office to add a medical clinic. This clinic provides both HIV-specialty care and primary care for the community, regardless of HIV status.

Because of our vastly expanded services, PATF undertook an examination of our current name to see whether or not it still fit our organization. We partnered with a team of marketing consultants to organize focus groups of current clients, potential clients (those at high risk of HIV), donors and supporters, and staff. Focus groups provided feedback on the current name and on several possibilities for a new name. **Overwhelmingly, focus group participants had negative reactions to the name "Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force."**

“I’m not comfortable using the name PATF. I don’t want to endanger my family — they’ve lived here forever. Lots of stigma.”

- A PATF client's reaction to the name "Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force"

Each component of our name drew negative reactions from focus group participants:

- "Pittsburgh" was seen as limiting, since PATF serves 11 counties. Some clients reported not knowing that PATF served their areas until they were referred to us.
- The term "AIDS" carries a lot of stigma, both for the clients themselves and their families. "AIDS" was often associated with death, and most people diagnosed with HIV today will never be diagnosed with AIDS.
- "Task Force" conjured up images of police, military, and drug enforcement.

Most surprisingly, many clients and potential clients reported that they knew someone who did not seek PATF's services because of our name. From the feedback we received, it is clear that the name "Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force" is creating an additional barrier to care for clients and potential clients.

“The word ‘AIDS’ itself is scary. I can be HIV negative and be a first time customer. Then I see AIDS and HIV all over and I get nervous.”

- A potential PATF client's reaction to the name "Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force"

Due to this overwhelming feedback, **PATF has decided to change its name.** We're currently in the process of finalizing our choice, which will be based on feedback from our focus groups and a team of marketing and communication professionals. Then, we will be working with a designer to create a new logo and look for the organization. We will also be redesigning our brochures, signage, website, and other materials.

Although we are changing our name, we honor the extraordinary service of the group of volunteer allies who founded the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force and we remain dedicated to serving those living with, affected by, or at risk of HIV/AIDS

We anticipate that we will be ready to announce the new name in the fall. **Stay tuned for more news!**

Meet PATF's newest staff members



Ashleigh Garcia, MSN, ACNP-BC, joins PATF as **Nurse Practitioner**, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the medical clinic and for providing care to patients. Prior to joining PATF, she worked with the Allegheny Health Network Cancer Institute, caring for both inpatient and outpatient cancer patients. She has also worked as a nurse at UPMC Shadyside Hospital. She completed both

her undergraduate and graduate degree in nursing from the University of Pittsburgh.

Alyssa Zerbe was hired as **Rural Case Manager**, serving clients in Beaver and Butler Counties. Prior to joining PATF, she interned at Lancaster County Early Intervention, where she coordinated care for children with developmental disabilities, and at Mercy Behavioral Health, where she worked with children with mental/behavioral health needs. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work degree from Elizabethtown College and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Pittsburgh.



Amy Commander also joins PATF as **Rural Case Manager**, serving clients in Fayette, Greene, and Washington Counties. She brings internship experience with her from Family Services of Western PA, where she provided support to clients living with severe and persistent mental illness, and at YWCA, where she promoted healthcare accessibility and wellness to underserved

and underinsured populations. She holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology from Temple University and a Master of Social Work degree with a certificate in mental health from the University of Pittsburgh. Commander also volunteers for Pittsburgh Action Against Rape.

Samantha Rance was hired as **Medical Case Manager**, serving clients in Allegheny County. Prior to joining PATF, she held clinical internships at Allegheny Health Network Wexford Health and Wellness Pavilion, where she served as a behavioral health consultant, and at Pittsburgh Action Against Rape, where she provided comprehensive accompaniment and advocacy services to survivors of sexual assault. She holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology from College of Charleston and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Pittsburgh. At Pitt, she was awarded the Cannon Fellowship in Integrated Healthcare.



Deron Taylor joins PATF as **Agency Case Manager**, serving clients in Allegheny County and responding to the needs of walk-in clients. Before joining PATF, he was a Therapist and Counselor at Allegheny County Jail, working with clients with drug and alcohol addiction. He has also served as Project Director at United Planning Organization in

Washington D.C., overseeing a program to help individuals released from prison get employment, and as an HIV Case Manager for Family Medical Counseling Center, also in Washington D.C. He holds a Bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Social Work degree from Howard University.

Alexandra Topper was hired as **Health Advocate**, responsible for HIV, STI, and hepatitis C counseling and testing and for serving clients in PATF's PrEP for Wellness program. She was previously a Schweitzer Fellow at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center in Pittsburgh, where she designed and implemented programming for LGBTQ youth. She has also worked as a summer camp counselor at Camp Brave Trails, the country's only leadership summer camp for LGBTQ youth. She holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology and a Master of Public Health degree with a certificate in LGBT Health and Wellness from the University of Pittsburgh.



Join PATF for two film screenings

PATF is teaming up with other community organizations on two film screenings this summer!



On Wednesday, July 19 at 7:00 p.m., we'll be showing "**How to Survive a Plague**" with Prevention Point Pittsburgh at the Glitter Box Theater (460 Melwood Avenue). The documentary tells the story of the brave AIDS activists of ACT UP who demanded the attention of a fearful nation and stopped AIDS from becoming a death sentence. The screening is free and concessions will be available by donation. [More info here.](#)



On Saturday, August 5 at 3:30 p.m., we'll be joining Reel Q LGBT Film Festival, Pittsburgh Transgender, and Persad Center at a showing of "**The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson**" at Melwood Screening Room (477 Melwood Avenue). The documentary reexamines the death of a beloved icon of the trans world while celebrating the story of two landmark pioneers of the trans-rights movement, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Tickets are \$10 and are [on sale here.](#)

Follow PATF to keep up with our latest news!



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Questions or comments about e-Perspectives? Please contact editor Andrew Ptaschinski at aptaschinski@patf.org.