

# Bridging the PrEP Gap in Portsmouth, VA

## A PATIENT CENTERED STRATEGY TO PREVENT HIV



The Portsmouth Health Department, together with community partners, are developing a public health initiative to increase PrEP access and usage, reduce new HIV infections, and promote health using a patient-centered, community-informed approach grounded in evidence based and implementation science.

### Overview

HIV remains a critical public health issue in Portsmouth, VA.

Despite advances in prevention, such as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), the communities most at risk continue to face gaps in access, education, and support.

### Our Approach

#### Implementation Science in Action

- Stakeholder interviews
- Developed 3 module staff training focused on PrEP education and stigma reduction training
- Training effectiveness measured via pre- and post- survey
- Local PrEP resources and key information aggregated into an easily accessible website format



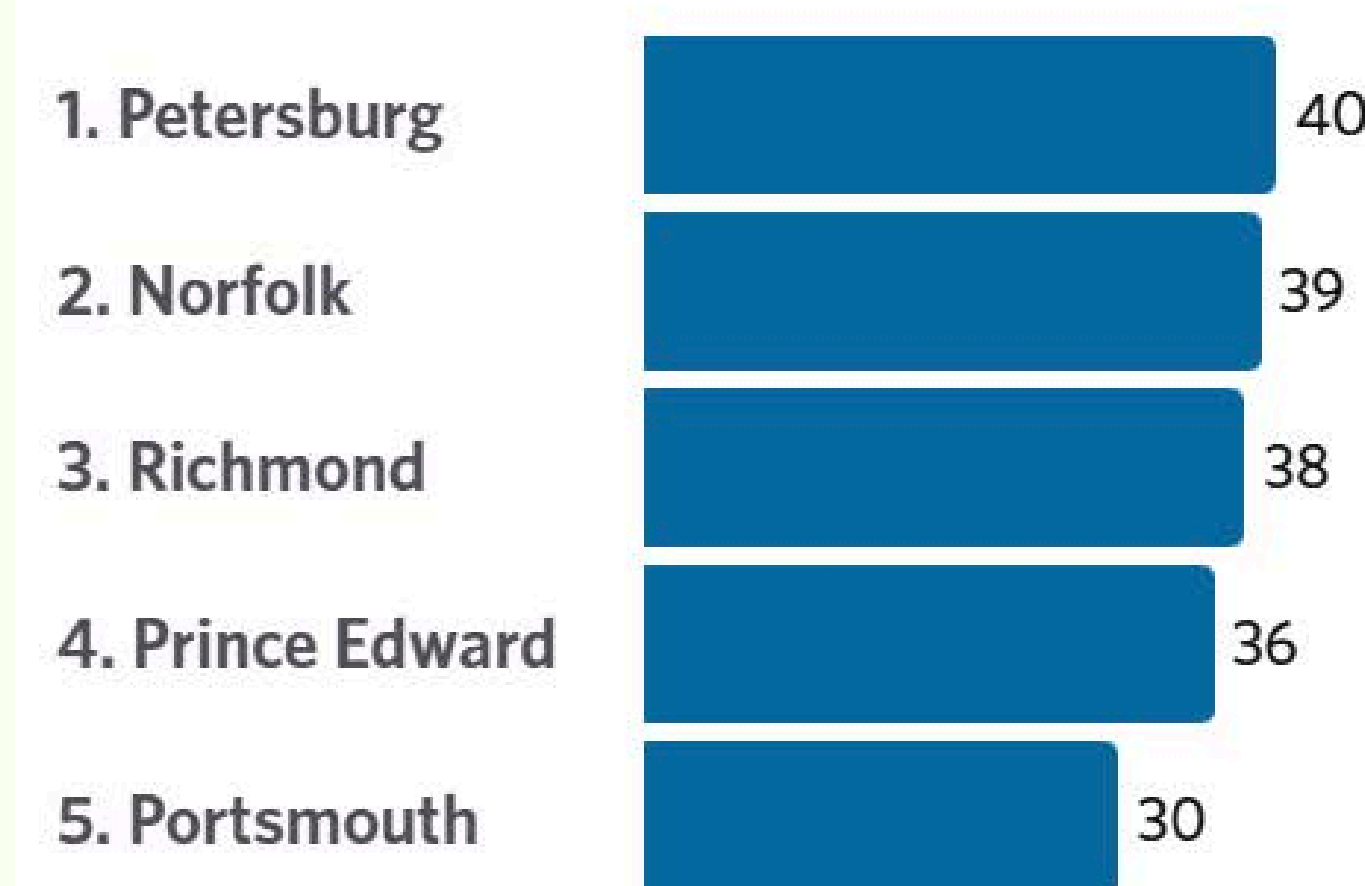
### The Problem: HIV in Portsmouth

The Southeastern U.S., including Virginia, accounts for 43% of new HIV cases

Recent occurrence of HIV "Clustering" in Virginia

The PrEP to Need Ratio (PnR) in the South is 3 PrEP users per new HIV diagnosis, compared to 8.5 in the Northeast

TOP AREAS: NEW DIAGNOSES RATE PER 100K, 2022



### Themes Identified

1. Stigma remains the central barrier to access across patients, providers, and systems
2. Despite being available for more than a decade, there is a widespread lack of knowledge and high prevalence of misinformation regarding PrEP
3. Lack of access to a variety of resources such as transportation, same day PrEP options, and a dedicated PrEP navigator all affect medication enrollment and retention
4. Trust and rapport are essential to the process of getting/keeping patients on PrEP
5. Providers need more training and tools

### Conclusion: A Community-Centered Path Forward

By expanding access, building trust, and using proven strategies to change behavior and attitudes, Portsmouth can close the PrEP gap, prevent new HIV infections, and improve health outcomes. This initiative will complement comprehensive harm reduction and pregnant moms who are at risk. It is not just a public health strategy but a commitment to community empowerment and improving health outcomes.

### Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to the entire Portsmouth Health Department staff. I found a lifelong mentor in Dr. Thomas, whose perspective as a female physician have been invaluable. I am continually inspired by the other Cohort 3 interns, who are already changing the world for the better.

### Why This Matters: The Cost and Consequence

Lifetime cost of HIV care: ~\$500,000 per person

HIV Prevention with PrEP: Up to 99% effective

Missed prevention opportunities result in:

- preventable illnesses
- deaths
- higher public healthcare spending

### Measuring Success

Portsmouth Health Department has already tripled its number of PrEP patients

59% of staff reported improved comfort discussing PrEP using non stigmatizing language

50% of staff showed increased PrEP knowledge post training

Outcome Metrics:

- Reduction in new HIV diagnoses
- Increased PrEP uptake and retention
- Community reported increase in awareness and reduction in stigma

### Sustainability & Next Steps

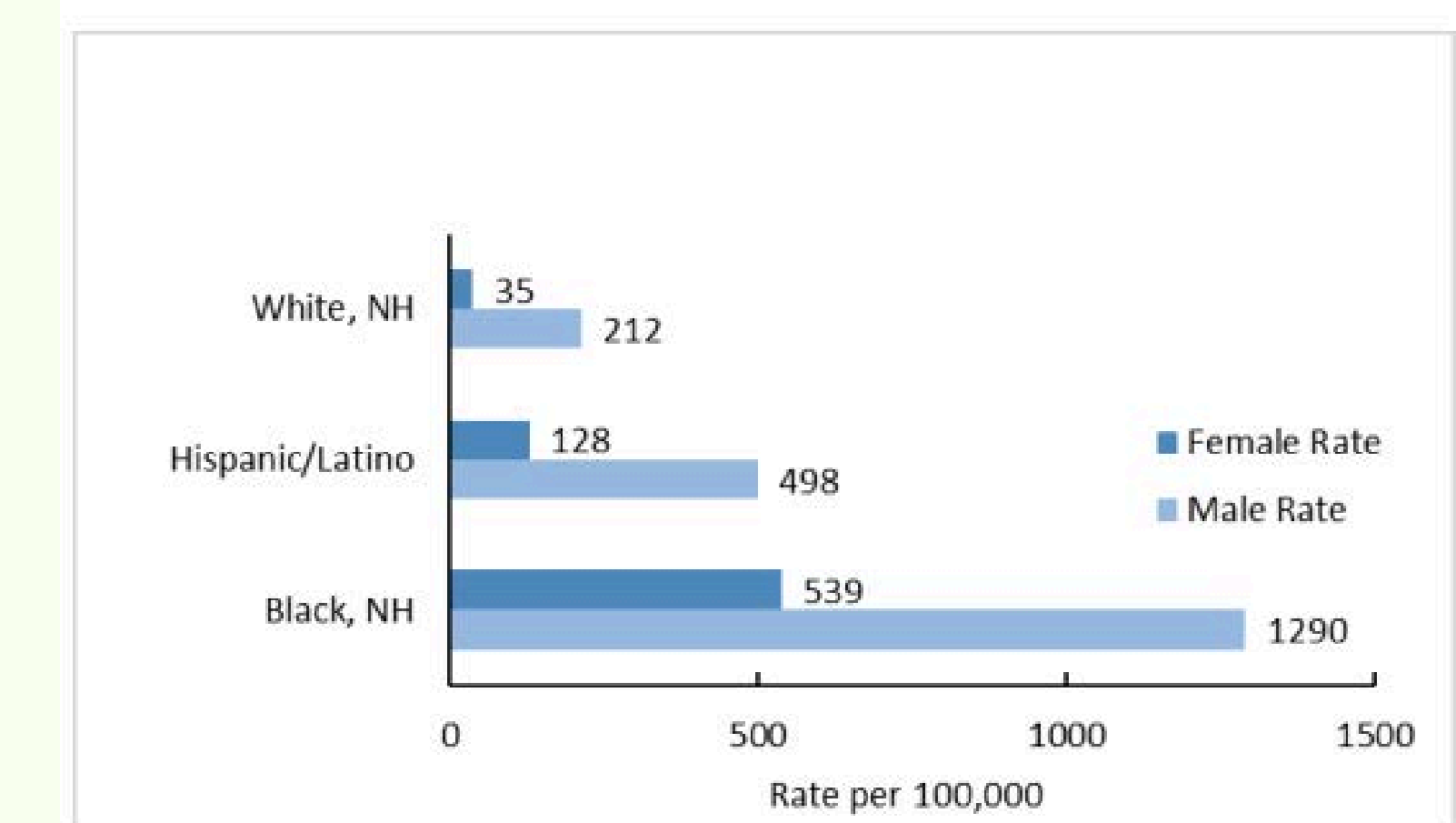
- Adaptation of Portsmouth staff training to other Health Departments
- PrEP information developed for medical education curriculum
- Continued community outreach utilizing updated resources
- Secure support in order to fill a designated PrEP navigator role and gain access to injectable PrEP option

### Target Populations

All at-risk community members, especially:

- Young black males (<35 years)
- LGBTQ+ Individuals
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- People who inject drugs
- Residents of underserved neighborhoods in Portsmouth

Figure 3: People with HIV in Virginia by Race/Ethnicity and Gender as of December 31, 2022



### Barriers to Overcome

- Patient access & transportation
- Community's lack of knowledge and preconceived notions about PrEP
- Local messaging
- Lack of provider education



### VISUAL LOGIC MODEL: BRIDGING THE PREP GAP IN PORTSMOUTH, VA

