

# GRANTEE REFLECTIONS

## PROPELLING THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP

Launched in 2017, *Positive Action for Youth (PAFY)* supports mentorship, leadership and workforce development to empower youth living with HIV with the tools, networks and resources they need to navigate into and stay engaged in adult care. Navigating a complex, sometimes stigmatizing healthcare system—and a host of other obstacles, from transportation to unstable housing—requires welcoming spaces and culturally competent staff that can meet young people’s basic needs and propel them on their journey to whole-person health. Two years in, *PAFY* has demonstrated that mentorship has the power to inspire young leaders and catalyze long-term engagement in care.

### MEDICAL MENTORING FRAMEWORKS

*PAFY*’s first round of grantees piloted or expanded scalable, community-driven frameworks for mentoring young people living with HIV. Medical mentorship can help young people manage their diagnosis and develop healthy behaviors, whether it’s through one-on-one counseling, regular text message check-ins or group social activities. Ultimately, HIV becomes only one piece of a young person’s larger story.

#### THE FIRST GRANTEEES:



**159**

mentees and youth living with HIV receiving high-impact services

**80%**

of mentees identifying as Black gay or bisexual men

**300**

more youth participating in testing and other events in hotspots across the South

**77%**

of youth successfully retained in care

**88%**

of youth now feel comfortable going to doctor’s appointments alone

**44%**

of youth were activated to take on increased advocacy or leadership roles in their communities

### FIELD INNOVATIONS AND ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESS

#### TRANSPARENCY & BI-DIRECTIONAL MENTORING

Organizations improve communication between senior and junior staff and reduce burn-out, ensuring mutual growth and respect.

*"An organization's culture is hugely impactful to how well young people are incorporated into the work and feel like they are heard."*

*—Chelsea Gulden, RAIN*

#### HOLISTIC, TRAUMA-INFORMED PROGRAMMING

Mentees achieve viral suppression when their basic needs are addressed and an organization intentionally considers their mental, physical and emotional well-being.

*"Being able to change the narrative is very transformative. To see them actually grow out of a place of isolation into a positive light has been very impactful."*

*—Kenneth Johnson, Abounding Prosperity*

#### POWER SHIFTED TO YOUTH

Organizations develop youth-informed and youth-driven programming that validates and empowers mentees and mentors.

*"Having young people be the face of your organization really does start a transformation in your community."*

*—Tony Christon-Walker, AIDS Alabama*

### INNOVATIONS

#### 2020 & BEYOND

**Advocates for Youth** has designed and disseminated a toolkit for developing mentorship programs for youth living with HIV, co-created with input from the first PAFY grantees. You can [access it here](#).

**New PAFY grantees in 2020:**



#### CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

Organizations build trust at all levels of the community and strengthen links to other social services when strong partnerships are nurtured.

*"They [young people] trusted us because of the partnerships we had made, partners that already had the community trust. And those partnerships really take time."*

*—Marteniz Brown, NAESM*

#### CULTURALLY COMPETENT & WELL-SUPPORTED MENTORS/STAFF

Mentees gain confidence and self-advocacy skills, and mentors gain professional development as well as an enhanced sense of purpose at work and in the community.

*"[This project] has allowed me to grow so much. To reassure myself that I know what I'm doing and have the necessary tools to manage this mentorship program."*

*—Laurenzo Surrell-Page, RAIN*



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These learnings are the result of interviews with *Positive Action for Youth* grantees as part of ViiV Healthcare's commitment to listening and supporting community-led work. Click [here](#) to read more.