

Announcement– One Community Health - 2024 Award for Involvement of People with HIV in Quality Improvement



Zachary Basler

Patient Liaison, One Community Health

CQII congratulates Zachary Basler for his outstanding work in client engagement. We are honored to present him with CQII's 2024 Award for Involvement of People with HIV in Quality Improvement (QI).

As a dedicated Patient Liaison and advocate at One Community Health (OCH), a community health center in Sacramento, CA, that receives Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) Parts A through D funding and serves over 3,100 people with HIV, Zach has had a transformative impact. He serves as both a member of the OCH HIV quality improvement (QI) committee and various local planning councils.

Zach's involvement in QI began during OCH's participation in CQII's Impact Now Collaborative, an 18-month national initiative aimed at improving viral suppression rates among high volume and high impact sites. One of the three primary goals of this collaborative was for participating sites to use a cross-functional team that included at least one person with HIV in their QI efforts. To achieve that goal, OCH identified a patient liaison to actively participate and contribute to QI through the lens of their client experiences. Director Keshia Lynch noted, *"Identifying a patient liaison posed a challenge initially. We struggled to find the right person. When we first connected with Zach, we weren't very familiar with each other, but we decided to take a chance—sometimes you have to step out on a limb."* She also emphasized, *"We were seeking someone with a strong desire to openly voice their opinions and thoughts honestly, while also making recommendations for positive change, and Zach embodied those qualities perfectly."*

As a person with HIV, Zach's integral involvement in the HIV QI committee ensures that client voices are heard and incorporated into QI initiatives, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and effectiveness. *"There are no easy solutions to problems that have been around forever; if there were, then they would have already been figured out,"* said Zach. His role includes conducting key informant interviews, recruiting clients, and ensure the community's needs shape their health care services.

Zach's proactive approach in transforming care processes such as streamlining linkage to care and advocating for Rapid ART (antiretroviral) initiation, and his ability to articulate client needs to drive meaningful changes, has led to notable improvements in operational efficiencies and

client outcomes. Through his leadership and participation in Gemba walks and process mapping, Zach spearheaded efforts to streamline the process. His hands-on involvement and insightful recommendations have led to significant improvements evidenced by the linkage to care rate at OCH soaring from 81% to an impressive 90% over the last 12 months.

Participants receive comprehensive training and support at OCH ensuring meaningful contributions to QI initiatives. This structured approach includes educational resources, ongoing support, and participation in learning sessions to deepen the understanding of QI principles. *"We're grateful that CQII required patient liaisons as part of this project. It was a push that was needed and helped our organization really understand the value, methodology, and philosophy of having clients involved in implementation from start to finish, which is instrumental in our HIV work,"* said Keshia.

Zach's advocacy and leadership has resulted in measurable improvements. Having Zach onboard has opened opportunities for OCH to engage additional clients in supporting its QI work. OCH looks forward to reaching out to individuals recommended by Zach to ensure continuity and incorporate a variety of viewpoints and perspectives. Their branch has become a model example within the agency for prioritizing client engagement and integrating client experiences directly into QI processes by gaining firsthand insights to inform program decisions.

"Nothing for us without us," Keshia said, emphasizing the importance of involving those directly affected in every step of the decision-making process. This philosophy has been a cornerstone of OCH's approach, ensuring that the voices of people with lived experiences are heard and integrated in improvement efforts.

Zach said, *"The biggest reward for me is increasing our viral suppression rate, knowing that we helped them stay suppressed, giving them a better quality of life, and preventing others from getting HIV."*

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