

ENDING AIDS BY 2020: Keeping the Vision on Women
The 10th Annual Women as the Face of AIDS Summit

Workshop Abstract Submission

- **PRESENTERS:** Chelsea Miller, GMHC (Gay Men’s Health Crisis) Community Coordinator & Sarah Glasser, Harlem United Treatment Adherence Specialist - Access To Care
- **TRACK:** 2) Our Bodies: Aging with HIV
- **TITLE:** “Our bodies is so totally different”: Stories of HIV Positive Women over 50
- **OBJECTIVE:** Women have long been underrepresented in the field of HIV. In the United States, HIV/AIDS research, treatment, and prevention programs for women have lagged behind those for men. The “Our bodies is so totally different” Workshop will present discrepancies in the data, show the results from a qualitative study conducted on women over the age of 50 who use GMHC services, and allow opportunities for female long-term survivors to share their stories with younger generations. Female long-term survivors of HIV who engage in advocacy and activism through GMHC’s Action Center program will share their experiences and advice to younger women living with the virus through small-group, roundtable discussions.
- **METHODS:** In 2014, GMHC gathered qualitative data on women living with HIV over 50 and produced a report titled, “Our bodies is so totally different”: A Qualitative Study of Women Over Age 50 Living With HIV/AIDS Who Receive Services at GMHC”. This workshop will share findings from this study. After the study is presented, participants will join small groups led by female members of GMHC’s Action Center over 50 years of age to intimately discuss experiences. This time is allotted for about half of the workshop. Newly diagnosed and young women are especially encouraged to participate, so that long-term survivors may pass on knowledge to younger generations. We would like to encourage the participants to learn from both the research and the small-group leaders, but we would also like to emphasize linking women to build relationships for future support.
- **RESULTS:** Participants will learn about the experiences of female long-term survivors of HIV, from both analytical and personal perspectives. Newly diagnosed women will have the opportunity to see and learn from the experiences of other women. Service providers will be given a unique and personal look into the lives of elder activist women and their individual stories and struggles. Participants can share and process their own experiences, and further, build intergenerational connections of commonalities. Themes around “health”, “interpersonal relationships”, and “individual strengths” will be of main focus from the study. After hearing the findings, participants are encouraged to give feedback on how AIDS Service Organizations in New York City can better support them and their aging needs.
- **CONCLUSIONS:** Very little is known about women living with HIV over 50. As one participant of GMHC’s study said, “All the research they’ve done is on male, gay white men.... Our bodies is so totally different.” Not only are the participants’ bodies different from gay white men — their experiences and lives are also very different. Women aging with HIV are a unique population and deserve research and resources targeted to their experiences and needs. This workshop will lift the voices of these women and their experiences. It will also provide a space for younger generations to listen to such experiences and learn from them.