

## **ASTDA Small Project Assistance: Final Report**

Date: November 27, 2023

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Project Name: Pre-conference Symposium for 2023 International Society of Sexually Transmitted Diseases Research (ISSTD) Meeting Addressing Sexual Healthcare Experiences of Transgender and Gender Diverse People

Project Goals: This pre-conference symposium was held the day prior to the start of the 2023 ISSTD meeting. This meeting is intended for transgender and gender diverse individuals to speak as a panel to conference attendees (sexual health clinicians, sexual health and STI researchers) about their lived experiences, including their personal experiences interfacing with sexual healthcare providers and sexual healthcare services. Transgender and gender diverse people are disproportionately affected by STIs and HIV in the US and worldwide. This population faces unique challenges related to sexual health and pursuit of healthcare in general, so giving members of the community a platform to convey these challenges to providers and researchers has the potential for closing gaps in these health disparities. This two hour symposium advanced the mission of championing practice in the field of STIs as it will give providers and researchers important insights into the experiences of transgender and gender diverse patients that can aid them in providing more affirming care. In addition, this activity lifts up the experiences of a community that has been vastly underserved by the medical community at large. Thus, this project promotes social justice as an antidote to the structural determinants of STIs.

Project Achievements: This session was held on July 24, 2023 in Chicago at the ISSTD pre-conference. We had three panelists participate: Gus Klein from Hunter College, City University of New York; Mahogany Toney from Alethia House in Birmingham, AL; Rosa Noviello of Milan, Italy. Drs. Olivia Van Gerwen and Teresa Battigier moderated the discussion between the panelists and the 40 attendees. This session was dynamic and had the feel of a discussion rather than a lecture of symposium, with attendees and panelists discussion topics such as sexual health priorities among transgender people, strategies to authentically engage trans populations in research and sexual health care systems, community engagement tactics, and the panelists personal experiences in sexual healthcare spaces, both as patients and as people who have worked in research and public health. This symposium was well received by the attendees, who provided feedback that they learned an immense amount about the types of issues faced by the trans community, not only in the sexual health space, but also in society in general. The panelists were thrilled to engage with researchers, clinicians, and public health officials to have their voices heard and their priorities valued.