The collaborative TransLife Care Project (TLC Project), led by Chicago House and Social Service Agency, is a comprehensive and multi-strategy approach to identifying HIV-positive transgender women of color who are out of care, engaging them successfully in accessible, quality, and culturally competent HIV primary care, and supporting their continuous engagement in care with individual and structural-level support systems. The project’s core intervention will utilize a strengths-based, case management approach to provide transgender women of color with intensive, short-term linkage-to-care services from TransLife Care Coordinators who are specialized in addressing clients’ barriers to care and connecting them to resources that address their essential and prioritized needs in order to support their long-term retention in care.

The TLC Project will leverage the resources and expertise of five project partners – AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Center On Halsted, Children’s Memorial Hospital, Heartland Health Outreach, and South Side Help Center – to identify transgender women of color living with HIV, create a broad network of culturally competent care providers, and delivery an array of ancillary, wrap-around services that help marginalized transgender women overcome barriers to care.

Identification and recruitment strategies will include street and community outreach, linkage with HIV testing/counseling providers and case managers, and a social networking strategy supported by numerous local transgender support organizations. Strategies to support engagement in care will include intervention sessions and linkage-to-care services of mobile TLC Coordinators, as well as Chicago’s first transgender-focused, weekly, drop-in center, the TransLife Care Center. The TLC Center will co-locate social, educational, and basic needs services with linkage-to-care services, in a safe, non-clinical environment, where targeted programming will include health education and group consultations from partnering medical care providers, to help encourage and reinforce engagement in HIV primary care.

The TLC Project will support transgender women’s retention in medical care with three levels of intervention: (1) at the client-level, the project will increase the number of transgender women of color engaged and retained in ongoing primary care and support optimal health outcomes with HIV care; (2) at a systems level, the TLC Project will provide trans-specific medical and cultural competency training to Ryan White-funded and mainstream primary care providers and case managers while also integrating transgender-focused linkages and training to local law enforcement and correctional facility staff, to help identify and refer transgender women of color in need of services and broaden Chicago’s network of competent care and service providers; and, (3) structural-level supports of Chicago House’s proven housing and employment programs will address primary obstacles to retention in care (lack of housing and employment services), while providing transgender women of color with wrap-around services and the practical and emotional supports to support their long-term stability and engagement in essential HIV primary care.