

November 7, 2019

# Katal Weekly Update

Katal Center for Health, Equity, and Justice



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## Hartford Community Conversation on Housing and Halfway Houses



Community members gather at Kamora's Cultural Corner for our Community Conversation on Housing and Halfway Houses.

Last week, our Connecticut team of members, Leaders, and organizers held a Community Conversation on Housing and Halfway Houses at **Kamora's Cultural Corner** in Hartford! Community members from around the Capitol City participated in the first of many conversations centered around the issues that affect us most.

Senior Community Organizer **Kenyatta Thompson** welcomed conversation among participants in the space, reminding people to show up as their full selves and “check their titles at the door.” Following the welcome, Apprentice Community Organizer **Dajuan Wiggins** opened the conversation by dispelling myths on halfway houses, distributing policies and procedures for all transitional houses in the state, and sharing his personal experiences at halfway houses in Connecticut.

Katal Leader **Cherell Banks** then gave an in-depth account of how she came to organizing, following the release of her son from incarceration. Cherell, who published an article on her experiences earlier this year in the Northend Agent's, discussed being a mother who faced many barriers navigating the complex system of criminal justice in Connecticut.

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To tie the issue of halfway houses and housing together, Katal Leader **Jerry Thompson** transitioned the conversation on housing. Jerry laid out the fair market rate of apartments in the area, showing how what is “fair” is not really fair at all. He then shared his experience navigating the housing system, even with the help from the organizations designed to help people experiencing homelessness. Jerry closed his speech by stressing the importance of organizing beyond individual issues.



**Katal Leader Jerry Thompson shares his experience navigating the housing system with the audience.**

In closing, participants went into small group discussions to outline what things they wanted to change, and created a plan to make it happen. We look forward to meeting and connecting with more of our community members at our next Hartford Community Conversation.

**Check out our thread of videos and photos from the Community Conversation on Housing and Halfway Houses at this [link](#).**

*To learn more about our work, and to join us at our next Monthly Meeting, contact **Dajuan Wiggins** at [dwiggins@katalcenter.org](mailto:dwiggins@katalcenter.org), or at (203) 295-4888.*

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## Keith Brown Departing Katal, Embarking on New Opportunities



Keith Brown leads our 2018 International Overdose Awareness Day Rally and Speakout at the Capitol in Albany.

It's with both excitement and a touch of sadness that we announce that **Keith Brown**, Katal's longtime Director of Health and Harm Reduction, is leaving the organization to take on new opportunities through his consulting practice, focused on municipal based work. Keith will continue work with Katal as a consultant in health and harm reduction.

*"I'm proud of my work at Katal and what we've built over 3 1/2 years together. In the current political moment, there are a unique set of challenges faced by individuals, municipalities, community-based organizations and others right now in the face of a larger national trend of death and despair, headlined by the overdose crisis and healthcare access," Keith said. "With my 20 years of experience in building direct-service harm reduction programs and wrangling Medicaid dollars to support marginalized populations, I'm excited to work with community groups around the country, as well as local and county governments, to advance harm reduction strategies that work."*

Keith joined Katal in the spring of 2016, as a project director for the Capital Region's pre-arrest diversion program known as Albany LEAD. Under his leadership, the program developed innovative methods for supporting and expanding case management functions using Medicaid redesign dollars - making Albany LEAD a model program for the rest of the country. Before long, Brown's role at Katal evolved into the Director of Health and Harm Reduction. He led the effort to make opioid maintenance therapies available to people detained in the local county jail.

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He developed renowned harm reduction trainings for Katal staff and members, allied organizations, and municipal agencies. Keith's work at Katal spanned pre-arrest diversion, harm reduction, healthcare access, overdose prevention, and more.

*"Keith brought essential harm reduction experience to the Katal Center when we launched," said Lorenzo Jones, Co-Executive Director of Katal. "His leadership has provided the critical direction a startup organization like Katal Center needs. His subject matter expertise has guided the Katal Team in developing harm reduction work and services in New York and Connecticut. We are excited to see what Keith does next and for our work together going forward!"*

In addition to continuing work with Katal, Keith is also taking on new contracts to conduct harm reduction trainings, train municipalities in securing Medicaid dollars to support arrest diversion, and more.

*"In the wake of the overdose crisis and a growing movement to end the war on drugs, we're seeing the mainstreaming of harm reduction, criminal justice reform, and new understandings of public health and safety," Keith said. "This creates new opportunities for innovative strategies to address these challenges. My work will continue to focus directly on these intersections. As I build out my consulting and other work, I look forward to continuing to work with Katal, while also connecting with current and future collaborators on what we might accomplish together."*

Please join all of us at Katal in sending a big THANK YOU to Keith for his work and leadership at Katal, and wishing him all the best as he sets out on this new phase of his work. Fortunately, Keith isn't going far - we are excited to continue working with Keith and you will no doubt see him continue to show up within our newsletter and on our social media feeds!

**Katal works to strengthen the people, policies, institutions, and movements that advance health, equity, and justice for everyone.**

Visit our website at [www.katalcenter.org](http://www.katalcenter.org) to learn more about our work and how you can get involved. Be sure to follow us across social media @katalcenter and stay in touch!

Contact us at [info@katalcenter.org](mailto:info@katalcenter.org) or at **646.875.8822**