

In a First, the Southern AIDS Coalition Appoints a Deputy Director

Venita Ray will manage the group's role in the \$100 million COMPASS initiative.

April 19, 2018 By [Trent Straube](#)

The Southern AIDS Coalition (SAC) appointed Venita Ray, who is HIV positive, as its new (and first-ever) deputy director, according to an [SAC press release](#).

POZ readers will recognize Ray from the cover of December's POZ 100 issue, which celebrated women making a difference in the epidemic. Others might know her for her work with the Positive Women's Network (PWN-USA), the SERO Project or Legacy Community Health in Houston, where she's the public policy manager and helped lead citywide efforts to create a plan to end the epidemic in Houston.

SAC is a nonpartisan coalition of government, business and community leaders dedicated to ending the epidemic in the South. You can learn more about SAC, its events and policy priorities [here](#).

"I am ecstatic to have Venita join us as deputy director," SAC executive director Nic Carlisle said in the press release. "Venita brings a breadth of experience that will be absolutely invaluable to SAC and our work to end the HIV epidemic in the South. This experience, combined with her passion for social justice, equity and advocacy, makes her the perfect leader for our organization."

Ray will help manage SAC's participation in Gilead Sciences' COMPASS (COMmitment to Partnership in Addressing HIV/AIDS in Southern States) Initiative, a \$100 million program to fight the epidemic in the South over the next 10 years. Read more about that [here](#).

"I am so excited to join the SAC team as its first-ever deputy director," said Ray in the press release. "It is unacceptable to me that the South is the center of the epidemic. As a woman living with HIV, I am interested in challenging the social and structural drivers that fuel the epidemic and partnering with communities most impacted and vulnerable to HIV, including Black women, Black and Latino gay and bisexual men, and women of trans experience."
