

## **JT Perez - Presenter**

JT Perez has been a Transgender advocate since 2013. With the help of his therapist, he formed a Trans Masculine support group in 2015. Later, with the help of the Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico, he helped create an all-inclusive group for all transgender folks, including their family and friends, to meet the demands of the community.

JT has previous experience volunteering for a non-profit HIV organization in 2013/2014. Just recently, he began working with an HIV/HCV community-based organization in September 2017. Last year, he helped form a chapter of The Mpowerment Project in his town. This is a community level HIV prevention education program that was developed by the CDC over 20 years ago.

JT has been volunteering for various organizations in his town since 2010, beginning with the local LGBTQ Center. He started in an entry level volunteer position and worked his way up to Operations Manager. He learned the value of fighting for social justice when he participated in a course held by Justice Advocates Academy, sponsored by ACLU and Equality New Mexico. The course was entirely designed by three women of color, two of them on the trans spectrum. In 2016, he became an In Our Own Voice Presenter with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). This was an avenue to present his own personal recovery story of living with a mental health condition, as well as discuss what it is like to be the survivor of a sexual assault. He has learned the value of sharing his stories to not only empower himself, but hopefully to help others empower themselves. It is JT's firm belief that only through speaking up about our own experiences will we learn about our commonalities and be able to understand our differences.