



Imagine Hope



Quarterly Report | July - September 2023

Early Intervention Services

A program of DBHDD / Office of Addictive Diseases.

Advantage Reaches Out

"A lot of agencies work in silos. We're all committed to healing, to recovery. But to treat the whole person, we need to work together."

*- Tarsha Deadwyler (above left with EIS Worker Angela Newman)
Advantage Director of Health Education & Integrated Care*

“We’re a community-based organization,” says EIS worker Angela Newman. “There’s a whole world outside Advantage that we want to serve; I call it broadening the reach. We have to broaden our reach because there are so many people that don't know about the services that we offer and have no idea that HIV is still a risk.”



Angela Newman and Tarsha Deadwyler

In September, Advantage Behavioral Health produced a health fair at the Athens-Clarke Public Library. Organized by Tarsha Deadwyler, Advantage Director of Health Education and Integrated Care, the fair was designed to attract people from the community, promote HIV awareness and testing, and call attention to available resources.

“A lot of agencies work in silos,” says Tarsha. “We’re all committed to healing, to recovery. But to treat the whole person, we need to work together.” The event offered free HIV testing and COVID test kits and included 14 community partners from Access Point, the local syringe services program; St. Mary’s Hospital; and the Athens Community Council on Aging; to Athens Wellness Clinic and Alliance Recovery Center.

One sign of a successful health fair, says Angela, happens after the event. “When someone I spoke to comes to me the following day or the following week and asks for an HIV test, that’s a successful outreach event for me.”

“In this field, we see individuals who come through our doors with no hope,” says Tarsha. “Rather than a this-is-what-I’m-going-to-give-you approach, we meet them where they are. Why did they come in? What do they need? Each client’s story is unique. Our role in that story is partner.”



Whole Health Recovery in Athens

"It's great to be able to represent Alliance Recovery Center in the community and so much fun to celebrate recovery."

- Millie Smith, (LMSW, CAADC, CPS), Alliance Recovery Center/Athens (above)

Alliance Recovery Center (ARC) is an MAT clinic in Athens where HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) screening are a routine part of both admission and the annual physical. This quarter, the MAT also provided HIV and HCV screening at Athens Recovery Fest. The alcohol and drug-free event, launched in 2012 as a festival of music, connection, and fun for individuals in recovery and their allies has become an annual draw for the wider community. "It's great to be able to represent ARC in the community and so much fun to celebrate recovery," says ARC Counselor Millie Smith, LMSW, CAADC, CPS.

The MAT takes a whole health approach to recovery. In addition to learning their HIV and HCV status, individuals in need of HIV treatment are linked to medical care and anyone living with HIV receives on-going support to stay on treatment. "We are in direct contact with the local Department of Public Health (DPH)," says Millie. "When they aren't to contact one of our clients we work with DPH to connect them with the individual."

Clients who are HCV+ are not only linked to care, most receive treatment in-house at ARC. As of this writing, 31 clients have been cured.*

“As individuals recover, the healing is very apparent, says Millie. “People get their kids back. They get jobs. They put on weight. At intake, we photograph each client. The way they look a year and a half later is so different that you would never recognize them from the original photo. Some people ask us to replace the old photo. Others take it home to remind them of how far they’ve come.”

* Completed medication and/or confirmed SVR (sustained viral load suppression)





Easy Listening at New Beginnings

"I don't start off talking about HIV. I ask them how the day is going. So we're talking and then we're laughing and they just open up. People love for you to listen. Sometimes all they need is someone to listen."

- Debra Wallace, New Beginnings, Thomasville (above)

Thomasville, Georgia is a rural community 11 miles from the Florida state line. "Most people here are very private about their health status," says EIS worker Debra Wallace of New Beginnings. "They may be willing to be tested for HIV but, whatever the result, they don't want anyone to know that they took the test."

"I just try to get out there and get people to know me and make them aware that I do testing." In September, Debra participated in *Shine On!* a recovery event hosted by Georgia Pines that took place at Lake Cherokee Park. "It was absolutely gorgeous," says Debra. "It was such a beautiful day; people were out, walking around the lake and a lot of them stopped by to ask questions and pick up pamphlets and swag."

“I handed out cards and let people know that if they want to learn their status or if they just need to talk, maybe about a scary situation where they had unprotected sex and they’re afraid to get tested, they can feel free to call me. I try to make myself available in any way I can.”



Debra Wallace's Office

“I got a couple of callbacks from that event; I often have people that call me and come to my office to be tested. At the health department, there’s a lot of traffic; my place is more private, it’s just one-on-one. People feel more comfortable here.”

“I don't start off talking about HIV. I ask them you how the day is going. I think just casually talking relaxes them. So we’re talking and then we’re laughing and they just open up. I gradually get into testing mode by asking them what brought them to the office. But the important thing is to listen. People love for you to listen. Sometimes all they need is someone to listen.”

Outreach

July - September 2023



Ava Hogue of Bridge Health joined Shannon Tillett and Lynn Williamson of Highland Rivers to do outreach at Recovery Rally in Walker County on September 30.



Alliance Recovery Center at Athens Recovery Fest
Theme: Recovery is Out of This World
Millie Smith (right) with Samantha Presley (far right) as an alien and an astronaut.





INSTI HIV Testing & Prevention Counseling / Part 2 - August 24, 2023



Serum-based HCV Training — September 28, 2023

The data below represents the individual and cumulative efforts of the statewide DBHDD HIV / HCV Early Intervention Services Project.

Imagine Hope HIV / HCV Screening & Linkage

July - September 2023

REGION 1	HIV	Site	HIV Testing, New HIV+ Results & Linkage				Individuals Self-Identified HIV+
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Avita	19	19	0	0	0
		Bridge Health	55	55	0	0	0
		Douglas CSB	0	0	0	0	0
		Highland Rivers	545	545	1	1	0
		Highland Rivers/Cobb CSB	135	135	0	0	0
		Pittard Clinic MAT	Turnover disrupted Early Intervention Services at this site.				
		Total	754	754	1	1	0
		HCV	Site	HCV Antibody Screening & Confirmatory Testing			Individuals Confirmed HCV RNA+
Total	Ab+			RNA Tests	RNA+	Linked to Medical Care	
Avita	123		14	14	7	1	
Bridge Health	60		11	11	7	5	
Highland Rivers	342		43	42	23	2	
Highland Rivers/Cobb CSB	228		8	8	8	1	
Lanier MAT	65		11	11	3	1	
Pittard Clinic MAT	116		25	24	8	0	
Ringgold MAT	54		8	9	1	1	
Total	988		120	119	57	11	

REGION 2	HIV	Site	HIV Testing, New HIV+ Results & Linkage				Individuals Self-Identified HIV+
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical	Re-linked to Medical Care
		Access Point	5	5	0	0	0
		Advantage	82	82	0	0	0
		Alliance Athens MAT	119	119	0	0	0
		DM & ADR MAT	147	147	0	0	0
		Oconee	No report received; numerous attempts to collect.				
	Serenity BHS	76	76	0	0	0	
	Total	394	394	0	0	0	
	HCV	Site	HCV Antibody Screening & Confirmatory Testing			Individuals Confirmed HCV RNA+	
Total			Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA+	Linked to Medical Care	
Access Point		2	0	0	0	0	
Alliance Athens MAT		129	21	21	5	0	
DM & ADR MAT		84	3	23	2	2	
Total	215	24	44	7	2		

REGION 3	HIV	Site	HIV Testing, New HIV+ Results & Linkage				Individuals Self-Identified HIV+
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Alliance MAT Conyers	37	37	0	0	0
Alliance MAT Decatur	26	26	0	0	0		
Ascensa	10	10	0	0	0		
CaringWorks	15	15	0	0	0		
Clayton Center	21	21	0	0	0		
DeKalb CSB	14	14	0	0	0		
Fulton County BHS	69	69	1	1	0		
MARR Inc.	43	43	0	0	0		
Newport	38	38	0	0	10		
North Fulton Tx Ctr MAT	7	7	0	0	0		
Odyssey	8	8	0	0	0		
Recovery Consultants	33	33	0	0	0		
ViewPoint Health	70	70	0	0	0		
West Care	139	139	1	1	1		
Total	530	530	2	2	11		
REGION 3	HCV	Site	HCV Antibody Screening & Confirmatory Testing			Individuals Confirmed RNA+	
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA+	Linked to Medical Care
		Alliance MAT Conyers	27	5	5	2	0
Alliance MAT Decatur	26	4	4	1	1		
CaringWorks	16	0	0	0	0		
Clayton	20	0	0	0	0		
Imagine Hope Outreach	22	19	19	13	13		
North Fulton Tx Ctr MAT	5	3	3	2	0		
Odyssey	6	0	0	0	0		
ViewPoint Health	152	3	3	2	1		
WestCare	98	0	0	0	0		
Total	372	34	34	20	15		

REGION 4	HIV	Site	HIV Testing, New HIV+ Results & Linkage				Individuals Self-Identified HIV+
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Aspire	84	84	1	1	7
		Legacy	78	78	0	0	1
		New Beginnings / Thomasville	105	105	0	0	0
	Total	267	267	1	1	8	
HCV	Site	HCV Antibody Screening & Confirmatory Testing			Individuals Confirmed HCV RNA+		
		Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	Linked to Medical Care	
	Aspire	96	3	3	3	2	
	Legacy	47	5	6	6	0	
	Total	143	8	9	9	2	

REGION 5	HIV	Site	HIV Testing, New HIV+ Results & Linkage				Individuals Self-Identified HIV+
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		CSB of Middle GA/ Quentin's Place	28	28	0	0	0
		Gateway	512	512	2	1	1
		Pineland	80	80	0	0	0
		Recovery Place	Turnover disrupted Early Intervention Services at this site.				
	Unison	181	181	0	0	0	
	Total	801	801	2	1	1	
	HCV	Site	HCV Antibody Screening & Confirmatory Testing			Individuals Confirmed HCV RNA+	
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	Linked to Medical Care
		Brunswick Drug Court	6	1	1	1	2
		CSB of Middle GA/Quentin's Place	158	18	18	7	2
Gateway		697	49	49	23	10	
Pineland		81	8	8	5	3	
Reliance MAT		1	0	0	0	1	
Unison		146	19	19	11	1	
Unison MAT	48	16	16	9	0		
Total	1137	111	111	56	20		

REGION 6	HIV	Site	HIV Testing, New HIV+ Results & Linkage				Individuals Self-Identified HIV+
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		McIntosh Trail	217	217	0	0	0
		Middle Flint	32	32	0	0	0
		New Horizons CSB	30	30	0	0	0
	Pathways	33	33	0	0	0	
	Total	312	312	0	0	0	
	HCV	Site	HCV Antibody Screening & Confirmatory Testing			Individuals Confirmed HCV RNA+	
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	Linked to Medical Care
		McIntosh Trail	100	7	7	6	0
New Horizons CSB		14	4	4	4	1	
Pathways		116	10	7	7	1	
Total	230	21	18	17	2		

Statewide	HIV	Statewide	HIV Testing, New HIV+ Results & Linkage				Individuals Self-Identified HIV+
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Total	3058	3058	6	5	20
	HCV	Statewide	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory		
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	Linked to Medical Care
Total	3085	318	335	166	52		

HIV Totals 3,058 HIV Tests, 6 New Confirmed HIV+ Diagnosis

From July - September 2023, DBHDD's EIS Program screened 3,058 individuals for HIV, including 205 tested during outreach. Of those tested, 100% received their results and 5 newly diagnosed HIV-positive clients were linked to care. We have not yet been able to verify that one individual, who was confirmed HIV-positive, has attended their first medical appointment. We notified the Georgia Department of Public Health and continue to work closely with them in an effort to link the individual to treatment. This quarter, nurses and counselors provided on-going support to 69 HIV+ clients and re-linked 20 previously diagnosed HIV+ clients, who had fallen out of care, to medical treatment.

HCV Totals, 3,085 HCV Tests, 166 New HCV/RNA+ Diagnoses

From July - September, 2023 DBHDD's EIS Program screened 3,085 individuals for HCV. Of those, 166 were confirmed RNA+ or chronically infected with HCV. During the same period, 52 attended their first medical appointment.



Imagine Hope manages the Early Intervention Services Program
on behalf of DBHDD / Office of Addictive Diseases