



Imagine Hope

SFY 2023 Year End Report

Early Intervention Service

A program of DBHDD / Office of Addictive Diseases



2023 Annual Gathering Group Photo

Reflections on SFY 2023

This has been a remarkable year for DBHDD's Early Intervention Services.

There is reason to celebrate and cause to reflect.

COVID had a significant impact on us all, professionally as well as personally.

After nearly three years under the constraints of COVID-19

WE ARE BACK!!

HIV testing statewide is up 32% over SFY 2022 with 12,663 screened

HCV testing statewide is up 27% over SFY 2022 with 12,102 screened

**"One client at a time, one test at a time,
one relationship at a time, together we
make way for a brighter future."**

- Marie Sutton



Marie Sutton, Imagine Hope CEO

Without exception, every program faced challenges during the COVID years. Clinics struggled to avoid being overwhelmed by a new and very scary virus and find ways to keep the doors open for critical behavioral health services. Staff illness and turnover affected EIS services and in some cases HIV and HCV had to temporarily be put on the back burner in the face of another deadly virus.

But together we held our vision in the face of overwhelming odds. Clinics delivered services in parking lots, and a creative PPE supply chain was established, enabling staff to more safely engage with clients. Agencies under significant duress reinvented services on the spot. We found ways to stay connected and to deliver support and training virtually. The commitment to Early Intervention Services held and we have come out the other side stronger than ever.

Imagine Hope was honored to stand with you during the long COVID winter. We are continually inspired by your dedication and are equally honored to stand with you as we work towards our state and national goal of eliminating new transmissions of HIV and HCV by 2030. Every time we engage a client in a conversation about reducing risk, or remove a barrier for clients seeking care for one of these deadly viruses, we are moving towards this lofty but obtainable goal. One client at a time, one test at a time, one relationship at a time. Together we make way for a brighter future.

EIS workers, in collaboration with Imagine Hope Linkage Navigators, were responsible for linking hundreds of clients to life saving care. This year, 20 newly diagnosed HIV+ clients were linked to care; 71 clients aware of their HIV status but out of care were re-linked to services; and 166 HCV-positive clients completed treatment and were cured of their HCV infection.



Annual Awards

Each year we have honored the agency that tests the most individuals for HIV and for HCV. Competition is fierce between the two top testing agencies, Highland Rivers Health and Gateway Behavioral Health Services. These two agencies cover large geographic areas and, between them, have five Crisis Stabilization Units which generate significant numbers in terms of testing.

However, small agencies play an equally critical role. Every test matters, whether it be in a large CSB or a small rural MAT. So this year the Imagine Hope team came up with three additional awards.

Butterfly award: This goes to an agency that had challenges but reinvented themselves and got their program back on track and ready to fly.

Heart of Gold: This goes to an EIS individual or agency that went above and beyond the requirements of the project.

Busy Bee: This award goes to one of the smaller EIS agencies that have maximized opportunities to screen and link clients to care.



Jafaria Robinson, Legacy Behavioral Health Services, Valdosta, GA

Butterfly Award

"We did, in fact, reinvent ourselves. But I was astonished and grateful that we were acknowledged in such a meaningful way." - Jafaria Robinson

For facing their challenges, reinventing their program, and getting ready to fly, Legacy won the first-ever Butterfly Award. Nurse Manager Jafaria Robinson credits her partnership with nurse Candi Spradley and support from Legacy leadership. "We are making an effort and we **are** improving, so I was absolutely honored," says Jafaria. Two years ago when Jafaria became nurse manager of the outpatient clinic, "the HIV program was non-existent. So it was a blank slate, an opportunity for Candi and me to make it our own. We worked together to build it from the ground up.

Asked what she would tell others who are facing challenges, Jafaria said, "My only advice would be to find peers who are like-minded. You don't have to do it by yourself. Connect with others who bring something good to the table and brainstorm. I would also reach out to other EIS programs to ask how they are succeeding."

"Here at Legacy, we have a lot of support. Our COO Paivi Parssin has been incredible. And we have a new chief clinical officer, Mallory Sims, who welcomes our ideas. We're all going in the same direction and we collaborate. We're not alone in this."



Jafaria Robinson and Candi Spradley



Heart of Gold Award

"When someone hears that they are cured, it takes a moment to sink in. The first reaction is disbelief. Then comes joy." - Ali McCorkle

The Athens Clinic was honored for going above and beyond. Counselor Kenzie Freeman and Peer Specialist Paula Montgomery accepted the award on behalf of the clinic.

This MAT makes a habit of finding new ways to serve patients. "We want to make sure that our patients are getting the best care that they possibly can," says Program Director Ali McCorkle. "We want to offer so much more than just medication assisted treatment."

Kenzie Freeman and Paula Montgomery, The Athens Clinic, Athens, GA

In 2018, the clinic launched in-house treatment for hepatitis C.

"It was a lot of work in the beginning, but we were willing to do it because the payoff is huge," says Ali. "Patients are a lot happier; patients are better cared for." As of June 2023, 36 individuals treated in-house have been cured of the virus.

"Most people are incredibly excited. But several were convinced that they would have hepatitis C for the rest of their lives. When they hear that they are cured, it takes a moment to sink in. The first reaction is disbelief; then comes joy."



Ali McCorkle, Program Director



Celitha Taylor, Melinda Walden, Valerie Lanier, Pineland, Statesboro

Busy Bees Award

**"When you help people get better, communities get better;
the world gets better. - Valerie Lanier**

Pineland won the award for maximizing opportunities to screen and link clients to care. Nurse Valerie Lanier explains, "It starts with rapport. We want our clients to know that we are here to help. Conversation goes a long way toward letting people see that we care."

Another key was establishing strong relationships with linkage partners. Before she started testing, Valerie met, face to face, with people at the local Department of Public Health and the Wellness Center. Since then, she and her team have been in regular contact and attend quarterly meetings with the Wellness Center.



Celitha Taylor and Valerie Lanier.

And they are enthusiastic about hosting testing events. "We want to get the community more involved. We want to be visible; we want people to know what we have to offer at Pineland. When you help people get better, communities get better; the world gets better."



Diane Bogart, Marty McHan, Lynn Williamson, and Shannon Tillett, Highland Rivers Behavioral Health

Number 1 Tester

"There's nothing greater for a nurse than to feel like she is absolutely made a difference. - Linda Sharpe, Highland Rivers Behavioral Health

More tests were performed at Highland Rivers, both HIV and hepatitis C (HCV), than at any other agency in the state. "Our wonderful staff is so motivated and dedicated," says Infection Control Nurse Linda Sharpe. The Early Intervention Services (EIS) team at Highland Rivers consists of: Linda Sharpe, Diane Bogart, Shannon Tillett, Lynn Williamson, Martha Elischer, Ilene Shirley, Lula Pointer, Janina Barns, Mason Hamilton, and Emily Phillips.

Identifying individuals with HIV or hepatitis C and helping to link them to care is at the heart of the EIS program. "It changes the course of a life," says Linda. An individual can live a normal lifespan with HIV, provided they are diagnosed and get treatment. And HCV is the first virus for which there is a cure; once diagnosed, an individual can complete treatment in 8 - 12 weeks.



I've worked in mental health and substance abuse for many years. And a lot of times, it's hard to see a significant impact. But with linking folks into treatment for hepatitis C and HIV, you can see that impact. And there's nothing greater for a nurse than to feel like you're absolutely making a difference."

Linda Sharpe, Highland Rivers
Behavioral Health

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

REGION 1		Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
HIV	Avita	86	86	0	0	0	0	0
	Bridge Health	252	252	0	0	0	0	0
	Douglas CSB	3	3	0	0	0	0	0
	Gateway Tx	12	12	0	0	0	0	0
	Highland Rivers	2097	2097	3	3	17	2	
	Highland Rivers/Cobb	501	501	0	0	0	0	
	MedMark Chatsworth MAT	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Pittard Clinic MAT	286	286	0	0	1	0	
	Total	3237	3237	3	3	18	2	
HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory				
		Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care	
	Avita	599	70	69	33	16	1	
	Bridge Health	312	60	56	37	17	11	
	Gateway Tx Ctr MAT	47	13	11	6	0	0	
	Highland Rivers	1491	202	185	98	9	19	
	Highland Rivers/Cobb	1148	63	63	58	20	8	
	Lanier MAT	262	51	50	15	2	3	
	MedMark Chatsworth MAT	10	2	3	2	0	3	
	Pittard Clinic MAT	431	79	78	36	0	0	
	Total	4483	573	551	298	67	50	

REGION 2	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Access Point	36	36	1	1	0	0
		Advantage	357	357	2	2	1	1
		Alliance Athens MAT	485	485	0	0	0	0
		CSB Middle GA	0	0	0	0	0	0
		DM & ADR MAT	476	475	0	0	1	1
		Oconee	33	33	0	0	0	0
		Serenity BHS	272	272	0	0	0	0
		Total	1659	1658	3	3	2	2
REGION 2	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
		Access Point	14	3	3	1	0	0
		Advantage	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Alliance Athens MAT	518	100	100	26	4	1
		DM & ADR MAT	417	16	67	17	3	1
		GA Tx Services MAT	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Total	949	119	170	44	7	2

Region	Category	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
			32	32	0	0	0	0
REGION 3	HIV	Alliance Conyers MAT	32	32	0	0	0	0
		Alliance Decatur MAT	86	86	0	0	0	0
		Ascensa St. Jude's	113	113	1	1	3	0
		CaringWorks	95	95	0	0	0	0
		Clayton Center	0	0	0	0	0	0
		DeKalb CSB	180	180	1	1	6	3
		Fulton County BHS	251	251	0	0	2	0
		MARR Inc.	154	154	0	0	1	1
		Newport	183	183	0	0	10	7
		North Fulton Tx MAT	2	2	0	0	0	0
		Odyssey	20	20	0	0	0	0
		Recovery Consultants	356	356	1	1	8	5
		ViewPoint Health	368	368	2	2	6	5
		Total	2204	2204	5	5	36	21
REGION 3	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
		Alliance Conyers MAT	163	8	8	7	0	1
		Alliance Decatur MAT	123	17	17	4	3	2
		Ascensa St. Jude's	115	12	28	15	4	0
		CaringWorks	99	2	1	1	0	0
		Clayton	59	0	0	0	0	0
		Imagine Hope Outreach	79	71	77	69	53	45
		Lakeland Centres MAT	0	0	0	0	0	0
		North Fulton Tx MAT	50	12	12	4	1	1
		Odyssey	16	1	1	1	1	0
		ViewPoint Health	769	20	18	11	8	1
		WestCare	286	0	0	0	2	2
		Total	1759	143	162	112	72	52

REGION 4	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Aspire	321	321	5	5	5	2
		Legacy	254	254	2	1	2	0
		New Beginnings	362	362	0	0	1	1
		Total	937	937	7	6	8	3
HCV	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
		Aspire	317	16	16	13	10	9
		Legacy	17	2	2	2	1	0
		Total	334	18	18	15	11	9

REGION 5		Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
			CSB of Middle GA / Quentin's Place	112	112	1	1	0
HIV		Gateway	2109	2109	1	0	4	2
		Pineland / John's Place	329	329	3	2	6	1
		Recovery Place	380	380	0	0	2	0
		Reliance MAT	20	20	0	0	1	0
		Unison	786	786	0	0	0	0
		Total	3736	3736	5	3	13	3
		Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
HCV			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
	Brunswick Drug Court	29	7	7	7	5	2	
	Coastal Community	37	19	19	10	3	2	
	CSB Quentin's Place	662	110	110	77	20	3	
	Gateway	2467	169	169	99	37	21	
	Pineland / John's Place	233	27	26	21	19	2	
	Recovery Place	381	36	34	24	8	5	
	Reliance MAT	10	5	5	4	1	0	
	Unison	456	76	76	48	20	5	
	Total	4380	495	492	315	125	41	

REGION 6	HIV	Site	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		McIntosh Trail	9	9	0	0	0	0
		Middle Flint	611	611	0	0	2	2
		New Horizons CSB	187	187	0	0	0	0
		Pathways	83	83	0	0	0	0
		Total	890	890	0	0	2	2
REGION 6	HCV	Site	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory			
			Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care
		McIntosh Trail	3	1	1	1	0	1
		New Horizons CSB	85	16	16	14	4	6
		Pathways	109	2	2	2	3	0
		Total	197	19	19	17	7	7

Statewide	HIV	Statewide	HIV Testing				New Self-ID'd HIV Clients	
			Tests	Post-Tests	HIV+	Linked to Medical Care	Self-ID+	Re-Linked to Medical Care
		Total	12663	12662	23	20	79	33
HCV	Statewide	Ab Screening		RNA Confirmatory				
		Total	Ab+	RNA Tests	RNA +	RNA+ Educated	Linked to Medical Care	
	Total	12102	1367	1412	801	289	161	

HIV Totals: 12,663 HIV Tests, 23 New Confirmed HIV+ Diagnoses

From July 2022 - June 2023, DBHDD's EIS Program screened 12,663 individuals for HIV, including 1,026 tested during outreach. Of those tested, 99% received their results and 20 newly diagnosed HIV-positive individuals were linked to care. Three newly diagnosed individuals were referred to Georgia DPH but have not been confirmed to have attended an appointment. This year, nurses and counselors provided on-going support to 95 HIV+ clients and re-linked 71 previously diagnosed HIV+ clients who had fallen out of care to medical treatment.

HCV Totals: 12,102 HCV Tests, 801 New HCV/RNA+ Diagnoses

From July 2022 - June 2023, DBHDD's HCV Project screened 12,102 individuals for HCV, 801 were confirmed RNA+ or chronically infected with HCV, and 166 HCV-positive individuals completed treatment and were cured of their HCV infection



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