

HIV/STD/HEPATITIS PREVENTION AND CARE UNIT



Quarterly Newsletter

Vol. 1 • Issue 1 • July 2022



**Welcome to the first
edition of the
HIV/STD/Hepatitis
Prevention and Care Unit
Newsletter**

Newsletter Introduction

By Pete Moore
HIV/STD Prevention Program Manager

Welcome to the first edition of the HIV/STD Prevention and Care Unit's newsletter! We are excited to launch this new method of sharing information with our partners. We plan to use this to inform you all about upcoming events, Communicable Disease Branch updates and programs,

and to highlight best case practices from our partners. Please let us know of ways we can improve this newsletter or if you have a program or event you would like to share, please email Pete Moore, at pete.moore@dhhs.nc.gov



Take Me Home

**NASTAD/BHOC
In-Home
HIV Testing Program
in North Carolina**

Take Me Home: The new In-home HIV Testing Program

By Marti Eisenberg
Integrated Targeted Testing Services Coordinator

The Division of Public Health’s Communicable Disease Branch has partnered with the National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD) and Building Healthy Online Communities (BHOC) to bring the National HIV Home Testing “TakeMeHome” Program to North Carolina. OraSure Technologies' In-Home HIV Tests are distributed by NASTAD and BHOC to people who meet state-defined risk criteria.

This program aims to reach out to men who have sex with men (MSM) who use dating apps and who live in any North Carolina zip code. The "TakeMeHome" Program offers confidential HIV testing at no cost to those who are at higher risk for HIV and have structural barriers to clinical testing.

From November 2021 to March 2022, 835 people in North Carolina received 1,007 test kits through this program. This new prevention tool allows people to be able to test in the privacy and comfort of their own home, overcoming the transportation barrier that some people in rural areas have been dealing with.

The TakeMeHome initiative provides the state a new strategy for identifying people who are unaware of their HIV status and facilitating access to treatment, care, and preventive services. This program actively reaches MSM, who use dating apps and live in any North Carolina ZIP code. For more information about the “TakeMeHome” Program, please visit [TakeMeHome \(https://takemehome.org/\)](https://takemehome.org/) or email Marti Eisenberg at marti.eisenberg@dhhs.nc.gov



Joint Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Plan

**By Lola Houston Hager
CAREWare Supervisor/Ryan White
Program Specialist**

As a requirement of both federal funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) HIV prevention, the Health Services and Resources Administration's (HRSA) Ryan White Part A (Charlotte TGA) and Part B (HIV Care), and HIV Medication Assistance Program (HMAP/ADAP), we are required to complete our 5-year HIV Joint Integrated Plan/Statewide Coordinated Statement of Need/Needs Assessment.

The information collected from consumers and providers will help North Carolina to continue providing funding for HIV care, testing, prevention, and medication assistance services. This survey and its results will be included in our Joint Integrated HIV Prevention and Care Plan that represents the entire State of North Carolina. As part of the process, we will be releasing Provider Surveys, Community Surveys, Resource Inventories, and holding Listening Sessions in each region.

The Community Surveys will be incentivized with \$25 Food Lion and Ingles Gift Cards. The Listening Sessions will be incentivized with \$25 Food Lion and Ingles Gift Cards for PLWH.

The intent is to have all data collection completed by mid-summer to allow Branch and Charlotte TGA Staff the opportunity to utilize the data as a portion of the information presented to CDC and HRSA in the Joint HIV Integrated Plan/Statewide Coordinated Statement of Need/Needs Assessment.

Not only will these instruments provide information for HIV prevention and care, but they will also provide much needed insight about housing for people who receive HIV prevention and care services. This will assist the state in improving services to those who benefit from our Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

As a reminder, our HIV Care Program oversees the distribution of those funds as well. We encourage all of you to advertise this information with the communities that you and your partner agencies serve.

We could all benefit from this huge effort. For more information on the Joint HIV Integrated Plan please reach out to Lola Houston-Hager at Lola.Houston-Hager@dhhs.nc.gov or (919) 755-3126.



Data to Action Program Efforts



Reducing HIV Stigma in North Carolina

By Caressa Harding
Data to Action Program Manager

The Data to Action Team is participating in National Minority AIDS Council’s (NMAC) Minority HIV/AIDS Fund (MHAF) Initiative - Ending Stigma through Collaboration and Lifting All to Empowerment (ESCALATE) Project. ESCALATE is a 15-month program (Nov 2021 - Jan 2023), and the first of its kind training and capacity building initiative specifically designed to address HIV related stigma and will work directly with Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program (RWHAP) Parts A, B, C and D organizations. The NC Stigma Reduction Team consists of Caressa Harding, Esther Ross, Luke Keeler (DtA team), Matt Hojatzadeh, (Care Program), Joanna Martinez, (State Bridge Counselor), and Beth Rhodes (Medical Monitoring Project).

The team will assess, develop, implement, and refine stigma reduction initiatives for the population of focus: African American/Black Gay, Bisexual, and MSM, ages 35-50, who are not virally suppressed. The team will engage in the ESCALATE Learning Collaborative and Affinity group sessions, Action periods, and receive one-on-one guidance and coaching support from our assigned Liaison. The overall goal is to create a stigma reduction tool kit consisting of resources that also can be used/adapted by Regional Networks of Care and Prevention (RNCP) and Transitional Grant Area (TGA) for other populations in their regions.

NC DHHS, Communicable Disease Branch

Stigma Reduction Team (SRT)



Caressa Harding
(she/her)
Data to Action
Program Manager
Point of Contact
(PoC)



Esther Ross
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Populations
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MMP Data
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Matt Hojatzadeh
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HIV Care Monitor
Stigma
Reduction
Team Member



Joanna Martinez
(she/her)
Region II State
Bridge Counselor
Stigma
Reduction
Team Member

Data to Action Program Efforts

Ending the Epidemic Plan for North Carolina



By Caressa Harding
Data to Action Program Manager

Data to Action will lead efforts to implement the North Carolina Ending the Epidemic (ETE) Plan. The team will assist and guide the regional networks with utilizing the plan for HIV care, testing, and prevention services for clients/consumers and communities they serve. The plan consists of three pillars: Engage and Embrace, Test and Treat, and Policy and Promotion. Each pillar has strategies, action steps and approaches to address stigma. The electronic version of the plan is available by using the links at the left to access the English or Spanish versions. For more information on how to retain a hard copy of the plan, please email Caressa Harding, caressa.harding@dhhs.nc.gov

[NC Plan to End the HIV Epidemic \(English\)](#)

[NC Plan to End the HIV Epidemic \(Spanish\)](#)

Stop HIV Stigma Campaign

By Luke Keeler
Data to Action Communications and Social Media Coordinator

Looking for content to challenge HIV stigma? Visit the [NC Stop HIV Stigma Campaign website](#). You can raise awareness of HIV stigma and other barriers that prevent access to care, while encouraging people to get tested and know their status by sharing some of the social media graphics to spark conversations about HIV and highlight progress being made to reduce HIV in North Carolina and the United States.



Viral Hepatitis Program Efforts

By Christina Caputo
Hepatitis Program Manager

The Hepatitis C Bridge Counselor Program expanded in 2022 to place one bridge counselor in each NCALHD Region. We have hired five additional Hepatitis C Bridge Counselors to serve the following regions: Region 3, Region 4, Region 5, Region 6, and Region 10.

Organization	Region	Bridge Counselor	Contact Information
Jackson County Health Department	1	Katherine Hutchinson	828-587-8291 katherinehutchinson@jacksonnc.org
CCWNC-Asheville	2	Emmaleigh Argaunata	828-348-2190 eargaunata@ccwnc.org
Yadkin County Medical Clinic	3	Chelsea Ellington	336-406-8110 cellington@yadkincountync.gov
Cabarrus Health Alliance	4	Danielle Coles	704-920-1137 Danielle.coles@cabarrushealth.org
Guilford County Government	5	Gloria Brown-Wilson	336-609-9256 gbrown1@guilfordcountync.gov
Cumberland County Health Department	6	Ana Jaramillo-Adams	910-433-3885 aadams@co.cumberland.nc.us
Granville-Vance	7	Hiring in Process	TBD
New Hanover County Health Department	8	Rebecca Morgan	910-798-6516 remorgan@nhcgv.com
TBD	9	Hiring in Process	TBD

Viral Hepatitis Program Efforts

Organization	Region	Bridge Counselor	Contact Information
Carteret County Health Department	10	Hannah Nelson	252-728-8550 ext. 5636 Hannah.nelson@carteretcountync.gov
Pitt County Health Department	10	TBD	TBD

By Christina Caputo
Hepatitis Program Manager

As a result of incredible advocacy work by the harm reduction community, and NC AIDS Action Network (NCAAN), we were able to purchase \$500,000 worth of harm reduction supplies that were distributed to 37 statewide harm reduction agencies. These resources are crucial in addressing and reducing communicable disease transmission amongst individuals who use drugs.



The hepatitis team is distributing these harm reduction supplies to their community partners/agencies across NC.



Viral Hepatitis Program Events + Trainings

By Christina Caputo
Hepatitis Program Manager

The Drug User Health Summit was a success:

The Drug User Health Summit was held June 17, 2022 in Winston-Salem, with our partners at Forsyth County. Over 160 attendees from a variety of backgrounds ranging from harm reduction, public health, substance use treatment, to medical providers convened for thoughtful conversation about how to improve drug user health in North Carolina. Speakers and discussions touched upon drug safety, Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) 101, grief in harm reduction, infectious disease and drug use, recovery resources, and viral hepatitis. This event was an excellent opportunity to learn about the state of drug user health and ways to improve it in North Carolina as well as network with colleagues.

Upcoming trainings:

CHAMP Bootcamp: July 22nd

World Hepatitis Day: July 28th

Phlebotomy Trainings: September 19th and 22nd (full training). October 17th and 20th (full training), and November 14th (refresher).

HIV Medication Assistance Program Updates

By Allison Bell
Medication Assistance Program Manager

North Carolina HIV Medication Assistance Program (HMAP) Summer Recertification – July 1, 2022 to September 30, 2022

Summer Recertification for all HMAP clients including the Uninsured/Underinsured Medication Assistance Program (UMAP), the State Pharmaceutical Assistance Program (SPAP), the Insurance Copayment Assistance Program (ICAP) and the Premium and Copayment Assistance Program (PCAP) begins July 1 and runs through September 30. The Priority Deadline is August 15, 2022. Applications submitted after the Priority Deadline date are not guaranteed to be processed before the next coverage period begins on October 1.

As a reminder, the following documents are required for Summer Recertification:

- Ryan White Part B/HIV Medication Assistance Program Financial Eligibility and Authorization Request Form (full HMAP Authorization Form)
- Documentation of Income
- Documentation of Residency

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Deadlines

State PrEP Advisory Committee (SPAC) Meetings

July 13 · September 14 · November 9

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

HIV Prevention & Care Providers Meetings

August 5 · November 4

9:30 am – 1:30 pm Microsoft TEAMS (subject to change)

Cultural Humility Trainings

August 5 · November 4

12:00-1:30 pm

Regional Quality Council (RQC) Meetings

August 12 · October 28

9:30 am – 11:30 am Zoom (subject to change)

HIV Prevention and Care Advisory Committee (HPCAC) Meetings

August 19 · November 18

9:30 am – 12:30 pm



HIV/STD Awareness Days

There are multiple days throughout the year designated to promote awareness about and acknowledge the diverse populations living with HIV and AIDS. Awareness days are powerful focal points to rally around and make a difference. There are several Awareness days that we want to bring attention to and they can be found on the [HIV/STD Awareness Days webpage](#). Review some of the awareness days and share some of the graphics on your social media channels to spread awareness and knowledge about HIV in your community!

Thank you for reading our first newsletter! We want to know what you thought of it and ways that it can be improved. Please take this short [survey](#) and provide feedback about this newsletter!

