March, 2020

Dear Friends and Supporters,

For 35 years, the Alliance for Positive Health has been serving individuals living with or impacted by HIV and other chronic and co-morbid conditions in our 17-County region of Northeastern New York. Through our programs and services, we ensure that those individuals struggling to manage their health conditions can more easily access the health and supportive services necessary for achieving positive health and social outcomes. As I look back on the last three and half decades, we have seen incredible medical advances that can ensure that HIV is no longer a death sentence. Similarly, we see advances in treatments for other chronic and co-morbid conditions. Unfortunately, many of the people we serve often have great difficulty navigating the often-complex health and social service systems meant to help them. Our programs have proven to be successful in helping break down those barriers to access, including, transportation assistance, financial assistance, housing retention services, health education services, food pantry services, care coordination, and health insurance navigation services, to name just a few.

We want to ensure that our clients are receiving the highest level of care and support from the Alliance along with those services they receive from other health and social service agencies. To do this well, we monitor the needs of the communities we serve through feedback from our clients and other area providers along with community data. To further strengthen our work, we have begun the process to set the Alliance and our clients on a path for long-term success through a variety of new or enhanced tools and services.

We began implementation of an Electronic Health Record to ensure more real time information on the clients we serve so that Alliance staff can more quickly coordinate care and monitor health and social outcomes for those we serve. We have also begun to look at other options to not only sustain our services but expand them where needed, including: becoming more involved in New York State’s Value Based Payment initiative as this program is designed to keep our clients at the heart of medical services across the state; expanding HIV, Hepatitis C, and STI testing through new office space; and we continued to address the impact of the opioid epidemic through our harm and risk reduction programming.

These are only a few of the many examples highlighting the fantastic work the Alliance achieves through the support of our dedicated staff, volunteers, board members, and donors. We hope you will continue to join us in our mission to reduce the impact and incidence of HIV/AIDS and other serious medical and social conditions throughout Northeastern New York.

Bill Faragon
Executive Director
PrEP

What is PrEP and How Effective is it?

PrEP is an acronym that stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. Simply put, PrEP is a pill taken once daily to prevent acquiring HIV. Taken alone, PrEP cannot treat HIV, however it is strong enough to greatly decrease the chance of someone acquiring the virus. Recent studies by Gilead have shown that PrEP can reduce the chance of acquiring HIV by over 99%. There are two medications now approved for PrEP: Truvada and Descovy. Both have similar effectiveness, however Descovy has been shown to have fewer long-term side effects. Descovy is not yet approved for women who engage in vaginal sex, but studies are pending.

Who Benefits from PrEP?

Any individual who engages in anal and/or vaginal sex with someone of an unknown HIV status would benefit from PrEP. Some examples include, but are not limited to those who have sex with multiple partners without using a condom, sex workers, those in open relationships, people who inject drugs and share equipment, and those who do not have control over their sexual environment.

Ending the Epidemic

On June 29, 2014, Governor Cuomo announced a three-point plan to end AIDS as an epidemic in New York State. The goal of the initiative is to decrease new HIV infections to the point where, by the end of 2020, the number of new HIV infections are below 750 per year. In 2018, new HIV infections in NYS were 2,451, a decrease of 11% from the prior year. Although the target reduction in numbers has not been reached state-wide, newly diagnosed cases of HIV have been slowly declining.

The three pillars to the plan are: to increase testing in order to identify newly diagnosed individuals living with HIV, increase access to HIV care so that those who are living with the virus can suppress their viral loads and maintain their health, limiting transmission, and to increase access to PrEP in an effort to keep those at high risk for HIV at a negative status. Considering how effective PrEP is, the third pillar to Ending the Epidemic is supported when anyone actively engages in their PrEP regimen. State-wide, nearly 32,000 patients filled a PrEP prescription in 2018, over nine times the amount from 2014. Each year, there is an increase in the number of individuals accessing PrEP, correlating with the steady decrease in newly diagnosed people living with HIV (down approximately 38% from 2014 to 2018).

How Can Someone Get on PrEP?

The first step to figuring out if PrEP is right for you is to find out your HIV status by getting tested. The Alliance for Positive Health offers free, confidential testing throughout the week. After being tested, individuals may be linked to a specialist who will help them navigate insurance, providers, and other potential barriers in accessing PrEP. For more information, contact 518.434.4686 or visit allianceforpositivehealth.org.
Harm reduction has always been an underlying philosophy of the Alliance for Positive Health, guiding our program development and our interactions with clients. Over the last few years we have had opportunities to expand our harm reduction model through several formal programs. It all began with the opening of our Syringe Exchange Program (SEP) in June 2015 and the Opioid Overdose Prevention Program in July 2015. While we knew the need for sterile injection supplies was present, we had no idea of the complexity of the need for the diverse array of services we would soon add to our existing programs. The SEP was successful in enrolling people mainly through word-of-mouth, which is a testimony to the need. We currently have 624 people enrolled.

Word of our Syringe Exchange Program spread into Essex County, leading to a collaboration with the Chief of Police and an expansion of services in Ticonderoga. In April 2016, we opened a satellite site and began providing syringe exchange services there twice a month. We are currently serving 39 people at our Ticonderoga site.

In order to assist the Plattsburgh City Police Department with managing discarded used syringes in public areas, we partnered with them to place sharps collection kiosks in locations throughout the city. When word got out, we were busy arranging for kiosks and wall-mounted units at other locations, including Plattsburgh, Moira and Ticonderoga. Harm Reduction staff collect the syringes from these locations at least once a month and have collected over 1,000 pounds of syringes so far!

In 2018 the NYS Department of Health provided additional funds to a few organizations to open a Drug User Health Hub (HUB). This program allowed us to expand the services available to our SEP participants and other individuals in the community. Services in the HUB include overdose aftercare and prevention, linkage to substance use treatment and other services, harm reduction counseling, treatment adherence counseling and cultural competency education for providers. In 2019, the HUB added a Buprenorphine Bridge Clinic. Buprenorphine is a prescription drug which helps people to stop using heroin or other opioid drugs. Our Physician’s Assistant and a Registered Nurse work with our harm reduction team to stabilize individuals by prescribing either Suboxone (Buprenorphine combined with Naloxone) or Subutex (the brand name for Buprenorphine), then bridge them to a provider to continue their treatment. We have stabilized twenty-three people and bridged seven to other providers. The PA and RN also provide minor wound care for abscesses as needed and linkage to other medical services.

Our Opioid Overdose Prevention Program expanded in 2018 to include collaboration with other organizations to provide services as satellite sites. We are now working with four local substance use treatment providers, two hospitals, one police department and one community organization. This allows us to train more individuals on the administration of Narcan and get it into the hands of those who need it. Along with our satellite partners, we have trained over 5,600 people and have reported 220 successful overdose reversals!

2018 was a busy year, as we also added Hepatitis C Patient Navigation to our Harm Reduction Services. The program includes testing for HIV and hepatitis C, linkages to treatment adherence counseling, harm reduction counseling, and linkage to other services. The program was selected to work with the University at Albany School of Public Health on the UPSIDE study (see next page for more information).

In 2019, we expanded Harm Reduction Services in our Glens Falls office. Our Harm Reduction Specialist provides syringe exchange services in the homes of our participants in Warren and Washington counties. She also provides HIV and hepatitis C testing, Hepatitis C Patient Navigation, opioid overdose prevention training, and cultural competency education to providers.

All members of our harm reduction team participate in local and statewide coalitions that work to reduce the impact of addiction, particularly with the opioid crisis. These coalitions have made a meaningful impact on reducing stigma, increasing awareness, providing options, and offering hope to individuals in the program.

Plans are underway to expand services through Peer Delivered Syringe Exchange (PDSE). This provides an opportunity to reach people in rural areas with transportation challenges, as well as those who are not ready to seek services directly. We are also working on developing a Second-Tier Syringe Exchange Program so that we may offer syringe services to our clients in our Albany and Schenectady offices. Stay tuned!
The UPSIDE Study

In June 2019, we began involvement with the UPSIDE study at our Plattsburgh syringe-exchange program. Conducted by the University at Albany School of Public Health and funded by the New York State Department of Health’s Hepatitis C (HCV) Elimination Initiative, UPSIDE is a study to understand the levels of hepatitis C and HIV among persons who inject drugs in New York.

So far, 55 people have enrolled in UPSIDE in Plattsburgh, 47 of whom were existing Alliance for Positive Health clients. Another 8 enrollees (15%) were individuals in their networks who came in for the first time and were able to receive HCV and HIV testing as part of the study.

Early results of the study show evidence of success and challenges in meeting the needs of this community. Although 89% of participants reported previously being tested for hepatitis C, 47% were currently infected with the virus, which can cause liver failure and cancer. The virus can also lead to death if not successfully treated.

All clients who participated in UPSIDE with a positive HCV test result also had an opportunity to be linked to care through our new HCV care navigation program.

Participants reported substantial transportation, nutrition, and healthcare access challenges as well as experiences with overdose, highlighting the role for the Alliance for Positive Health to continue to serve and expand programs for this population in Plattsburgh and similar communities in the region.

Client Success Highlight

Neffertti spent most of her childhood in foster care and group homes and says that due to this experience she had a mistrust for workers. So, when Crystal Cummings (Recovery Coordinator) and Morgan Nydegger (Client Support Specialist) in the Alliance for Positive Health’s CDPHP Health And Recovery Plan (HARP) program reached out to explain services that she qualified for, she was naturally reluctant. Her first response was “I don’t want anyone coming to my house”. When Crystal explained she would meet Neffertti at a place of her choosing in the community she was sold.

Neffertti spent years in and out of the hospital due to her Lupus diagnosis and struggled with Depression and PTSD. That along with raising 4 daughters, two of which are disabled, made it difficult to work outside of the home. Neffretti, states, “I wanted to work” and “I started the process on my own and wasn’t getting anywhere”. After completing the HARP assessment and plan of care with Crystal Cummings, Neffertti learned she is eligible for Intensive Supported Employment, Habilitation and Educational Support services through Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). She was connected with Trinity Alliance as her HCBS provider and has started to make great strides.

Along with her peers, Neffertti created a resume, completed multiple employment applications and interviews, and she was offered and accepted a job. She plans to start orientation very soon. In the meantime, Neffertti is working on obtaining her driver’s license and a car and plans to start the college application process.

She is also working to identify what she does and doesn’t want out of the work experience so she can be sure to find the best fit for her. She states about her worker, Crystal “I love working with her and going through this process”. Neffertti’s next step is to return to college for a degree in child psychology. She states that she started this process years ago, but it was sidelined with her illnesses and hospitalizations. Her health has been stable for the past year and she is ready to return. Her plan is to give back and mentor young women being released from group homes. You can often find Neffertti surrounded by school children, volunteering at the local school and helping out neighbors in need of a meal. Her advise to others is, “just because you grew up in the system doesn’t mean it needs to hold you down. It is never too late to start over.”
Our New RAP Partnership

The Alliance for Positive Health has partnered with Capital District Physicians Health Plan (CDPHP) to become a Recovery Advocate Program (RAP). Simply put, our agency is contracted to be able to complete New York State Health And Recovery Plans (HARP) brief assessments on clients that are currently not enrolled in Health Home care management.

Through this partnership with CDPHP, we are able to outreach to their HARP-enrolled clients and assist them in getting the services they need. We also have an opportunity to explain what Health Homes are. Many clients do not understand what a Health Home is and, therefore do not enroll when they are referred by their outside providers.

Our partnership with CDPHP allows us to reach out to these individuals and explain the benefits of Health Home care management and link them to Home and Community Base Services (HCBS). These services are not meant to be provided on-site. Having services offered in one’s home or community eliminates many of the barriers traditionally seen with rehabilitative programs (transportation, engagement and retention, flexibility with medical and behavioral health appointments, etc). This partnership will provide access to services to increase the chance of improving clients behavioral and physical health.

CCHL Task Force

The Cultural Competence and Health Literacy (CCHL) Task Force is a group of staff that encompass a variety of programs, offices and staff. Meeting once a month, CCHL works on numerous initiatives within the Alliance. Some accomplishments during the 2018-2019 fiscal year include:

- A mural with the CCHL mission designed and installed in all offices (see above)
- Open forum meeting held for all agency staff
- Rocking chair donation to provide comfort and anxiety reduction for clients
- Artwork donation from clients and staff
- Gender-neutral signage created for bathrooms where available
- Continued translation of Alliance forms into Spanish
- Began providing spotlights on individuals who embody a specific monthly theme of awareness.

Some of the CCHL Task Force goals moving forward involve expanding past initiatives such as increasing gender-neutral signage where possible, painting waiting rooms, and creating a nonverbal communication board for the hearing impaired. CCHL also strives to improve communication within the Alliance regarding action items.

There are also some new projects that we will be working on including the launch of our first Speaker Panel event, which will be held during Black History Month and focus on the experience of People of Color in the workplace. There will also be continued opportunities for trainings related to CCHL topics in the future.
### 2018-2019 Non-Salary/Benefit Expenses

- Repairs & Maintenance/Depreciation: $326,359
- Travel, Office, & Program Supplies: $315,928
- Rent & Utilities/Telecom: $84,280

### 2018-2019 Salary & Benefit Expenses

#### Salaries
- Salaries: $4,956,746

#### Employee Benefits Expense
- Health Insurance
- Dental Insurance
- Life Insurance
- Workers Compensation
- Disability
- FICA
- Unemployment Insurance
- Pension/Retirement
- Tuition Reimbursement

### Funding Year by Source

- **State**
- **Health Homes / Fee For Service**
- **AIDS Institute - Ryan White / CDC**
- **Subcontracts / COPDHP**
- **Events / Contributions**
- **HOPWA**
- **Other Government / Direct Federal**
- **Grant Income - Non Government**

### Client Assistance by Type

- Housing
- Nutrition
- Transportation
- Other

### Agency Events

**2018 Columbia–Greene Garden Party**
The Columbia–Greene Garden Party was held in Livingston, NY at the home of James LaForce and Stephen Henderson.

**World AIDS Day 2018**
Teens from the Alliance for Positive Health’s Real Talk program tabled at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center.

**16th Annual Dining Out For Life®**
Over 50 Restaurants participated in the 2019 Dining Out For Life® event, donating a percentage of their sales to the Alliance for Positive Health’s HIV/AIDS program services.

**2018 BOO-jolais Monster Ball**
Hundreds of guests unleashed their inner beasts at the Annual BOO jolais Wine Celebration, held at the Albany Capital Center.

**Holiday Gift Wrapping**
Over 100 volunteers came together to wrap holiday gifts at the Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza throughout the holiday season, raising over $3,200 for the Alliance for Positive Health’s program services.

**Capital Pride 2019**
The Alliance for Positive Health showed its support for our LGBT+ community by tabling at Pride events and marching in parades throughout Northeastern New York.
2019 marks the 35th Anniversary of the Alliance for Positive Health (formerly the AIDS Council of Northeastern New York). Since its inception in 1984, the agency has provided services to people living with HIV/AIDS and other serious medical and social conditions. With support from people like you, we are able to link these individuals to care, provide HIV/STI/Hepatitis C testing, and offer transportation, financial, nutrition and housing assistance.

Our donor contributions help bridge the gap created by the costs of providing vital services that are not covered by government funding. Thank you for your continued support! We look forward to another successful year.

Available Opportunities
Administrative Support
At-Risk Youth
Care Management
Community Health
Corrections Health
Development
Finance
Housing Retention
Human Resources
Information Technology
LGBT+ Health
Marketing
Nutrition Education
Peer Navigation
Quality Improvement
Senior Leadership
Substance Use Referral
Syringe Exchange
Transportation
Women’s Health

Interested in a career with the Alliance for Positive Health?
Visit our website: allianceforpositivehealth.org
This list reflects contributions received by the Alliance for Positive Health between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019. If you were omitted from this list, or if you are listed incorrectly, please contact our Development Office at 518.434.4686.