



A History of the Atlanta Harm Reduction Center



In 1994, AHRC grew out of concern about the high rate of HIV transmission among Atlanta's injection drug users (IDUs). AHRC was formally incorporated in 1995 with the goal of educating IDUs and non-users, community leaders, public health, safety, and elected officials, and other organizations about the effectiveness of harm reduction strategies to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS. One year later, AHRC secured permanent office space and obtained 501(c)(3) status from the federal government. To our knowledge, AHRC is the only organization in Atlanta that focuses specifically on promoting harm reduction strategies not only to affected populations, but also to the broader community.

Building trusting relationships between AHRC outreach workers and active drug users is the foundation upon which behavioral changes are built. In the community where we deliver interventions, we have provided HIV prevention tools and information every single Saturday morning since May of 1997 - rain, shine, and holidays. In 2002 AHRC expanded its outreach efforts to include Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

AHRC's HIV prevention outreach is based on Harm Reduction approaches to HIV prevention. Harm Reduction strategies were developed as a public health response to the prevention needs of active drug users. Within a harm reduction perspective the user is treated with dignity as a human being. Positive behavioral changes are viewed progressively with distinct stages based on the Transtheoretical Model developed by psychologists Prochaska and DiClemente in 1986. The outreach worker's role is that of supportive facilitator, helping the participant develop the motivation and skills to change high-risk behaviors. The participant (drug user) sets the pace and goals of behavior changes. Our approach is positive and helpful and our understanding of behavior change places responsibility and power in the hands of the drug user. The service delivery environment ideally fosters self-esteem, self-advocacy, and community among active users. Our consistent delivery of services combined with our non-judgmental/non-manipulative approach has gained us the trust and respect of the community.

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PREVENTION POINT
PRECONTEMPLATION



HEALTHY OUTCOMES



SAFETY COUNTS



LINKAGE TO
TREATMENT



LIFE LINKS



"The agency is commended for the innovative programming that it offers. The board, volunteers and staff expressed a commitment to ensure the agency lives on. It is apparent that the work the agency is doing in the English Avenue community is a vital service. It is true you are saving the lives of these vulnerable and often forgotten people."

Dr. Bernard Turner and Charles Page



Our Mission



The Atlanta Harm Reduction Center, Inc. is a community-based prevention and wellness organization committed to improving health and wellbeing in partnership with marginalized individuals and communities. AHRC provides education and tiered risk reduction programs to empower adults in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of substance use, HIV, STDs, hepatitis and other infectious and communicable diseases.

Our Vision



To service consumers who require a higher level of care and follow through with linkage to inpatient or outpatient medical, substance abuse treatment or transitional facilities. AHRC provides consumers with the tools to making safer choices in life in through evidence-based intervention and prevention programs. We build relationships with individuals who are vulnerable to contracting or transmitting HIV/AIDS, STD's and Hepatitis Viruses and other blood borne pathogens while utilizing a harm reduction approach.



The Atlanta Harm Reduction Center, Inc. established in 1998, is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization in compliance with all applicable local and state licensing, accreditation,

Our Program

Atlanta Harm Reduction Coalition [AHRC] is committed to improving the health and well-being of marginalized individuals, many of whom are actively using drugs. Atlanta Harm Reduction Coalition utilizes partners in the NPU-L, Atlanta area CBOs, ASOs, and local universities to reduce rate of new infections and transmissions of HIV/AIDS amongst drug users. AHRCs utilize referral mechanisms linking clients to local community health providers in our area, increasing accessibility to care for the underserved. Because of these collaborations we are able to provide high quality services to our population and, collectively we provide risk reduction education for individuals at-risk of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, and other STIs. AHRC utilizes an eclectic approach of science based/proven risk reduction interventions & programs to decrease risk of new infection and transmission of HIV/AIDS.

We are located in a severely neglected, impoverished Atlanta neighborhood, infamous for high crime, drug use and drug sales. Despair, homelessness, neglect, and family violence are prevalent throughout the community commonly referred to as "the Bluffs", an area known for drug activity and associated crime. The lack of community based intervention and support services has contributed to further deterioration of a community with a rich history. Today the English Avenue Community has formulated

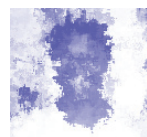
community wide efforts which will begin to address the social ills of their community. Through coalition building community stakeholders formulated goals and objectives to clean-up their neighbor, and develop their community. AHRC serves a major resource for information about Public & Community Health needs in the English Avenue Community.



Since 1994 AHRC has opened its doors to the drug addicted, homeless, transients, young adults, seniors and others in need. AHRC provides them with a safe haven of support necessary to change their lives using "small decisions to make giant steps". Our approach towards service over past (15) years has a proven track record often resulting in the positive re-introduction of our clients into communities in which they can thrive. Reducing harmful effects cause by on-going drug use & high risk behaviors is our goal. We at AHRC envision taking our harm reduction strategies

and methods into rural communities, jails, prisons, and other facets of our society in greatest need of our services. Our vision is to EXPAND and train others interested in formulating needle exchange programs how to effectively and comprehensively do so. Harm reduction works!!!!

Client Profile



Edwina is a native of Atlanta, GA. In 2005, a close friend of hers introduced her to the primary area that AHRC serves. She was actively using drugs. During her time in the neighborhood, she discovered the Atlanta Harm Reduction. Edwina was drawn because she would continue to see a lot of people (as she puts it), coming "in and out" of the AHRC facility. Curiosity drew her into the facility. While at AHRC, she remembers feeling an immediate sense of comfort. There was no judgment. This kept her coming and gave her a sense of belonging. The more and more Edwina came, the more she began to get the help she needed through dental, referral, and testing services. With a growing interest, Edwina began helping out at AHRC. AHRC guided Edwina to get some formal training, and introduced her to an educational program that would train her in Customer Service. Edwina went through the training and was certified as a, Customer Service Specialist in January of 2009, and has been a key volunteer and major player on the AHRC team ever since. She wants all to know that, "It's not where you start, it's where you FINISH!"

