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HIV CARE CONNECT

Reducing Disparities in HIV Care

Principal Investigator's Welcome



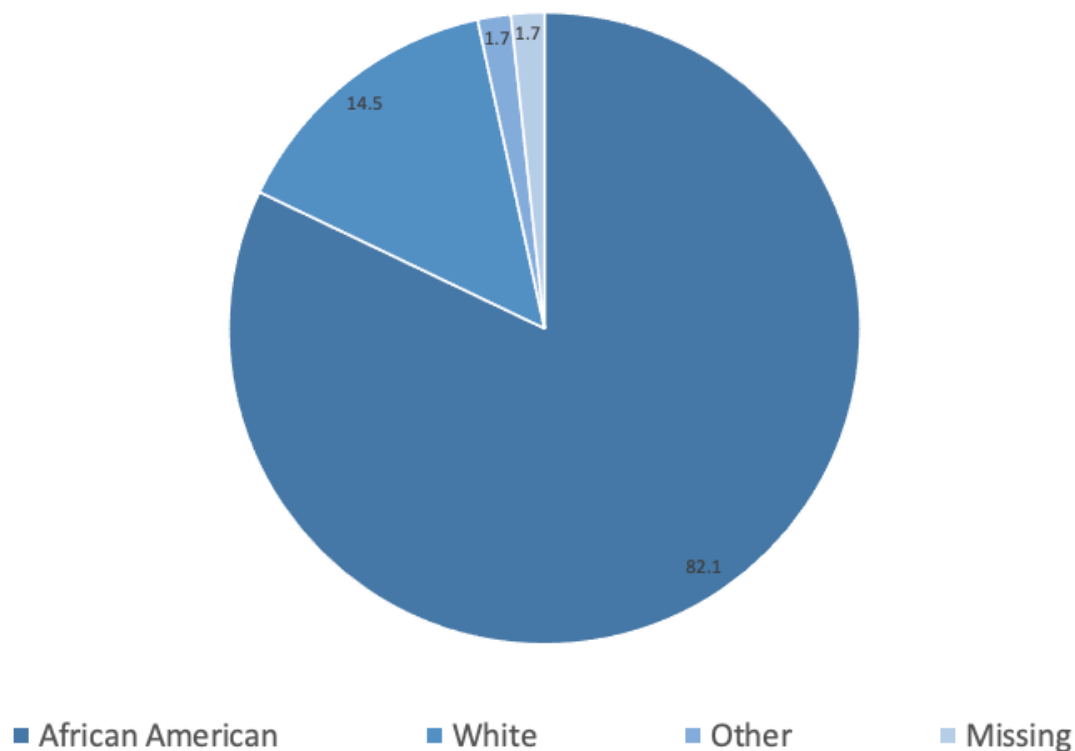
Greetings from the HIV Care Connect National Program Office! Reflecting on our time together in Birmingham in January 2020, one cannot help but feel a range of emotions. There was so much optimism at the launch of a new multi-site initiative to address social determinants of health, thereby empowering our patients in the Southern region. I could never imagine how the world would change in a matter of weeks, impacting all of our lives, communities, and programs, including HIV Care Connect. We have mourned the loss of team members; navigated changes in program leadership, partners, and team composition; and maintained our shared sense of purpose and camaraderie -- virtually. As year 3 winds down, and year 4 commences, I remain optimistic and look forward to site visits and an all team meeting -- in person! The perseverance and dedication of all HIV Care Connect team members has inspired all of us at the NPO, and the stories of individual patient experiences and successes have kept us going. As we have begun to aggregate cross-site data and work with local evaluation teams on interim analyses, abstracts, and manuscripts, I could not be more excited for what the next 2 years have in store for all of us, nor more thankful to have the opportunity to continue to work with such an extraordinary collection of people via HIV Care Connect.

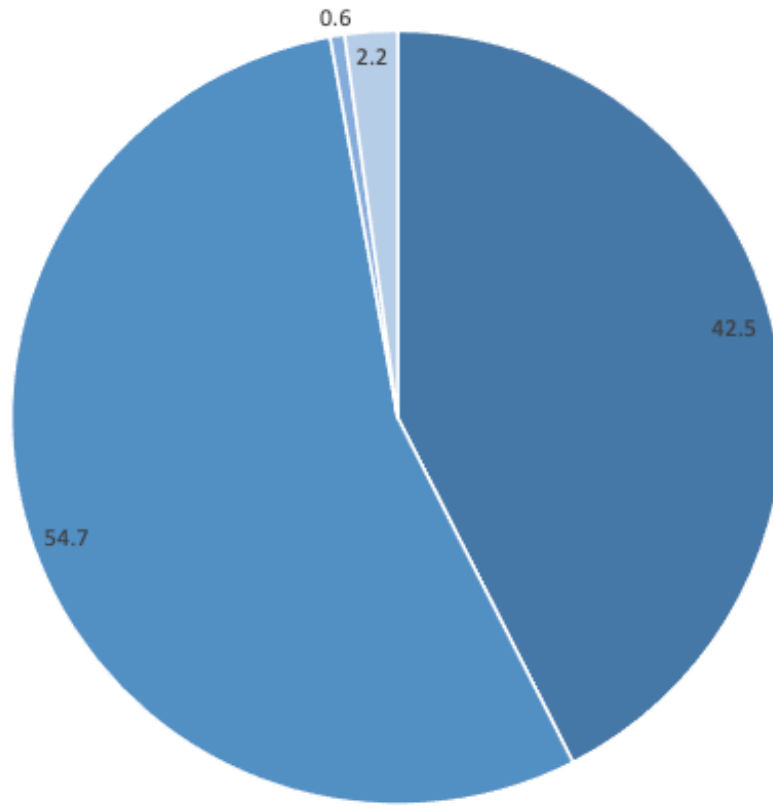
NEWS

Preliminary Results are In!

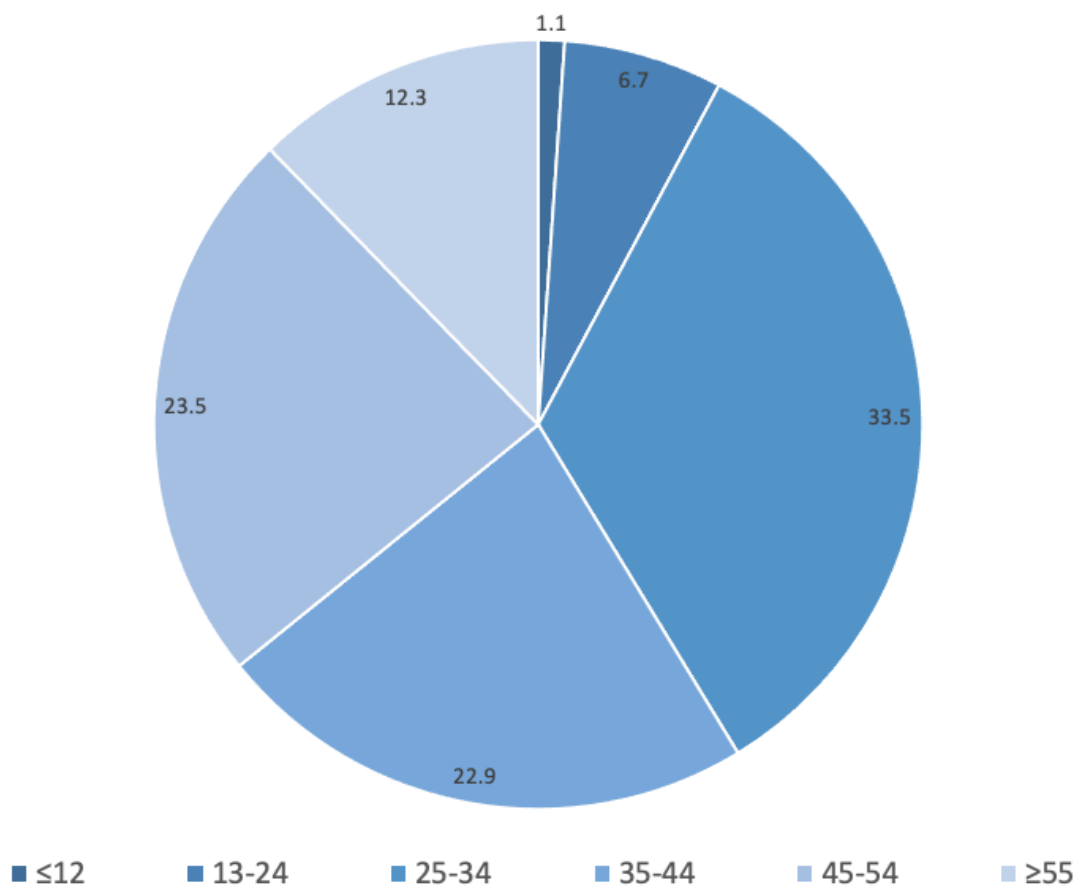
As the National Program Office for HIV Care Connect (HCC), the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Research and Informatics Service Center (RISC) is responsible for conducting ongoing evaluations for the funding organization, the Merck Foundation, in order to measure the effectiveness HCC interventions across all three sites. As part of these efforts, we collect clinical and patient reported outcomes data on a quarterly basis from the sites. The first data upload was completed in March 2022, and although we are still processing and analyzing these data, we wanted to at least show you some demographic characteristics of HCC participants. Take a look at the piecharts below to get a feeling for the **180 HCC participants** included in the March data!

Participant Race Breakdown





■ Female ■ Male ■ Transgender (MtoF) ■ Missing



Evidence-Based Interventions: iENGAGE and ARTAS

The overarching goal of HIV Care Connect is to improve linkage to and retention in high-quality HIV care for populations in the Southeastern United States most impacted by HIV, as well as develop sustainable collaborations between the health care sector and other social sectors to address barriers to HIV care. A primary route for addressing barriers and improving healthcare outcomes is through evidence-based interventions (EBIs), or practices/programs that use integrated strategies, activities, and services and have documented effectiveness in changing targeted behavior. For HIV Care Connect, two different EBIs—Integrating Engagement and Adherence Goals upon Entry (iENGAGE) and Anti-Retroviral Treatment and Access to Services (ARTAS)—are being utilized to guide program grantees' interventions.

iENGAGE is an intervention for people living with HIV (PLWH) who are newly enrolled in HIV care to help support their efforts in achieving and maintaining viral suppression. Because retention in HIV care and adherence to prescribed antiretroviral therapy (ART) are two key behaviors that lead to sustained viral suppression, the iENGAGE intervention targets motivation and skill-building through a series of sessions and screeners that identify strengths, barriers, and

social determinants of health (SDOH) in a target population. To learn more about the original iENGAGE intervention, please review <http://andy.x10.bz/Pubs/Pub116.pdf>.

ARTAS is an individual-level, multisession intervention designed to link newly diagnosed PLWH to comprehensive medical care. ARTAS is rooted in the Strengths-based Case Management (SBCM) Model, which encourages participants to identify and use their personal strengths to create goals for managing their HIV diagnosis, as well as build an effective working relationship with their case managers, social workers, and linkage coordinators. This intervention is useful in empowering participants in creating and managing an action plan best suited for their diagnosis and lifestyle. To learn more about ARTAS, including training opportunities for your clinic staff, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/effective-interventions/treat/artas>

MAO Completes Pilot of Job Readiness Program for CARE Participants

Medical Advocacy and Outreach's (MAO) **C**reating **A**ccess, **R**etention, and **E**ngagement (CARE) program for the HIV Care Connect initiative aims to address barriers to care for MAO's unusually high percentage of women living with HIV (WLWH). To assist



in securing economic stability for WLWH, CARE has created a Job Readiness Program to help enrollees feel competent and confident as they search for and maintain employment. This 8-week program uses a hybrid model to pair in-person and online instruction for both Montgomery and Dothan clients and covers a variety of topics including interactive/communication skills, active listening, problem-solving, career exploration, job search and applications, and interview preparation.

The Job Readiness Program, led by MAO's Director of Human Resources Sandra Orum, successfully completed its first session in June of 2022.

as the pre and post assessments, participated in a graduation and were celebrated by CARE staff and participants. The program has been met with success and increased interest, with the second session for new enrollees recently starting. Congratulations to Sandra, CARE, and the recent program graduates for a successful first session! To learn more about MAO's CARE project, visit the HIV Care Connect website.

UMMC's Marcus McPherson and CERe's Hope Gilbert Present at 34th NCSWH in NOLA

In May 2022, All-in at Circle's Research and Outreach Specialist, Marcus McPherson, and local evaluator, HOPE Gilbert from the Center for Research Evaluation at Ole Miss, presented at the 34th Annual National Conference on Social Work and HIV/AIDS in New Orleans, Louisiana. This year's NCSWH conference theme was "On the Path Toward Healing, Justice, and Action" and featured several sessions related to health equity, gender equity, and aging in HIV care. This 3-day conference gave social workers from across the country the opportunity to learn how to utilize their field's tools, interventions, and expertise to address the various barriers people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) face and how their work can help improve the lives of those they serve. Congratulations Marcus, Hope, and the All-in at Circle team for a fantastic session! You can find a copy of [UMMC's presentation](#) by visiting the HIV Care Connect website.

Project DARE's Alecia Tramel-McIntyre Selected as Member of HHS's "I am a Work of ART" Campaign



In June of 2022, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched the “I am a Work of ART” campaign, a community-informed national campaign designed to encourage people living with HIV to seek care, stay in care, and achieve viral suppression by taking antiretroviral therapy (ART). This campaign works as part of the Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) by supporting the EHE key pillar to “Treat people with HIV rapidly and effectively to reach sustained viral suppression.” In 2021, Care Resource partnered with Positive People Network (PPN), a peer-led HIV/AIDS organization that is focused on educating the community on HIV prevention and PrEP and offering support to PLWHA in the community. PPN founder and executive board member, Alecia Tramel-McIntyre, has been selected as one of the “I am a Work of ART” campaign’s models and spokespeople! To learn more about the campaign, please visit [HIV.gov](https://www.hiv.gov) and to learn more



Events & Announcements

- The HIV Care Connect [Website](#) is refreshed! Give it a look and check out the new and improved [Community of Practice](#), too.
- Mark your calendars, HCC Staff! Care Resource is hosting their next webinar on Lessons Learned during Project DARE at 12:00 pm CT/1:00 pm EST. Reach out to Kaylee at kburgan@uabmc.edu if you have not received the calendar invite.
- HIV Care Connect local and cross-site evaluators started a quarterly check-in and community conversation on August 1st to discuss successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
- The [HIV Nursing Conference](#) is coming up in September.
- What are Fast Track Cities up to these days? Find out at the [Fast Track Cities 2022 Conference](#) in October.
- Take a look at the upcoming [United States Conference on AIDS](#).

Staff Spotlight

Q1: What drew you to working in HIV Care?

The great need for advocacy in my community.

Q2: What do you do for Project DARE at Care Resource?

Implement and Coordinate Project DARE.

Q3: What is your favorite thing about working on Project DARE?

The impact of Project DARE on the client.

Q4: Do you have any hobbies?

Baking and Furniture consignment shopping.



Melvin Fort

Visit Key West... stopping along the way at the many individual islands for lunch, swimming, and just relaxing.

Miami, FL

Publications of Interests

- [CDC report](#) about HIV testing rates dropping among certain groups
- Personal [POZ article](#) about participating in an HIV Cure trial
- [UCSF AIDS Prevention Research Center Booklet](#) about recent research
- Insightful [Health Affairs Journal Volume](#) about integrating social services into HIV care
- [A Knowledgeable article](#) about HIV activists and COVID-19
- A moving [Health Affairs essay](#) about aging in place in NYC after having lived through the AIDS epidemic
- [AIDS and Behavior article](#) about how transportation barriers affect quality of life among a sample of middle-aged adults living with HIV
- [AIDS and Behavior article](#) regarding the cost-effectiveness of re-engagement and retention interventions
- Reflective [Health Affairs podcast](#) where an individual talks about lessons learned from surviving two pandemics: AIDS and COVID-19
- [CBS News Hour story](#) about responding to monkeypox with lessons from the AIDS Crisis
- Four publications for a better South: [Scalawag](#), [Oxford American](#), [Bitter Southerner](#), and [Facing South](#)

Welcome New HCC Staff!



MAO
Joined October 2021



Angel Perez
Client Support Assistant II
Care Resource
Joined July 2022



Yesica Alvarado
Linkage to Care Coordinator
Care Resource
Joined May 2022

Staff Shoutout

The UAB RISC wants to thank **Kaylee Burgan** for all her hard work on HIV Care Connect! From project management to meeting coordination to data analysis to stepping in when Tom retired,

Client Stories

Any encouraging client stories you'd like to share (with the permission of clients, of course).

you, Kaylee!

Have stories you want to share, news to proclaim, or a colleague to congratulate? Please press [HERE](#) to provide us with content to include in the next edition of the newsletter.



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