

## INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM



**TO:** Board of Commissioners

**THROUGH** Dick Anderson, County Manager  
Anna Roach, Chief Operating Officer

**FROM:** LaTrina R. Foster, Director

**DATE:** November 2, 2021

**SUBJECT:** 3rd Quarter 2021 Status Update

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### BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

#### **CORE SERVICES**

The Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities provides core outpatient behavioral health services for adults experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorders. Core outpatient behavioral health services include:

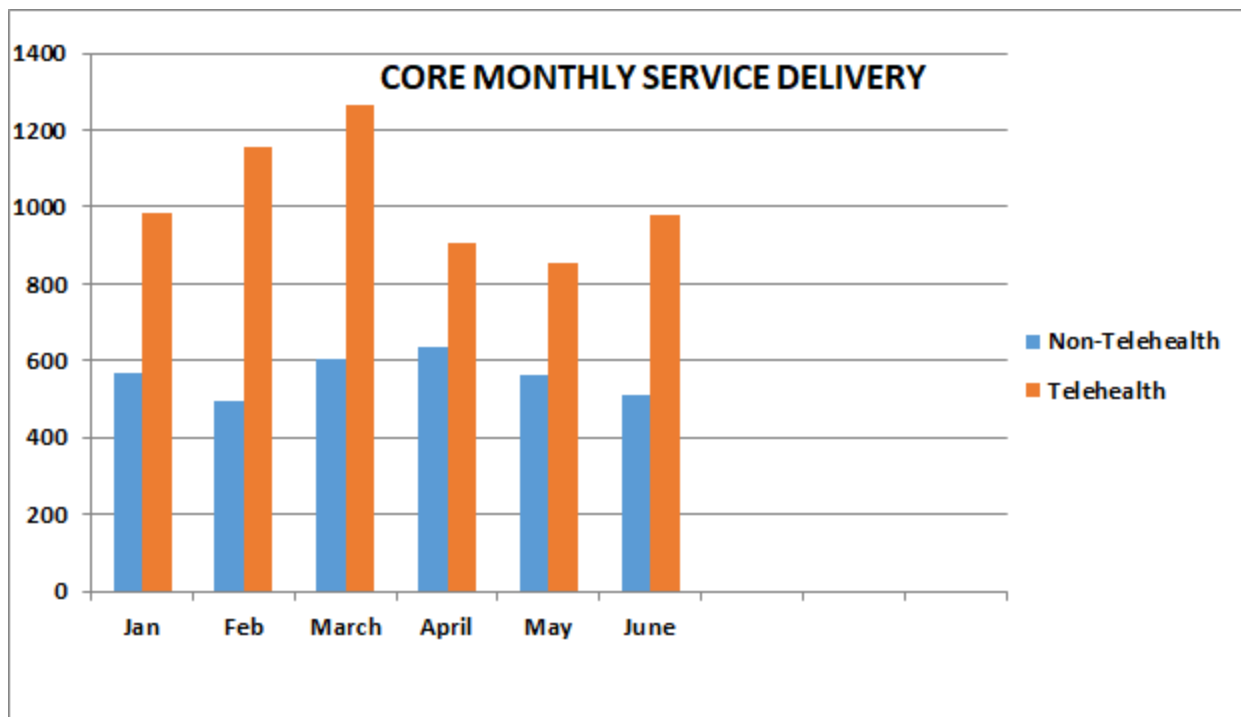
- Psychiatric Evaluations
- Behavioral Health Assessments
- Case Management & Skills Building
- Nursing Evaluations
- Individual, Family and Group Counseling
- Peer Support Services
- Diagnostic Assessments
- Addiction Services
- Crisis Intervention

It is the Department's goal to offer no to low cost; barrier-free access to services to Fulton County residents. The main focus is to ensure that individuals who are uninsured or underinsured have access to care. Prior to COVID, adult core services were offered within 3 locations: Center for Health & Rehabilitation, South Fulton Service Center and North Fulton Service Center, with walk-in services available at each location Monday through Friday. Modified in person services are being offered two days per week at the Center for Health and Rehabilitation and South Fulton Service Center. Effective July 9th, services will increase to 3 days per week at these locations. North Fulton Service Center reopened for one day per week in June and will add an additional day as of July 14th. With modified in person scheduling and telehealth services, the Fulton County Department of

Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities provided services to **1,351** individuals from January 1 through June 30, 2021 and completed **9,350** total client activities.

### **TELEHEALTH SERVICES & FACILITY REOPENING**

Due to the pandemic, a modified in person schedule continued through the second quarter in order to offer onsite behavioral health services to clients in need of psychiatric and nursing services for both new and existing clients at the Center for Health & Rehabilitation and South Fulton Service Center two days per week. North Fulton Service Center reopened for in person behavioral health services in June. Telehealth through telephonic and virtual means are being offered to clients to minimize in person contacts. It has been determined that offering services through telehealth reduces the burden to clients who often experience transportation barriers. From January - June 30th, of the **9,350** total service contacts, they were rendered either via telephonic or telehealth means (**6,163**) and/or face to face/in person (**3,187**). Ultimately, **66%** of services delivered thus far in 2021 were completed through the use of a telehealth platform. Safety precautions remain in effect at the three facilities where in person services are currently being offered.



#### *Plans for 2021*

The goal is to increase the number of days and locations of in-person services as the infection rates decrease and vaccination decimation increases. Ongoing efforts continue to be established to increase the number of citizens who access services, i.e. establishing collaborative relationships with community partners, increase in marketing efforts, etc. It is vitally important to continue to

offer telehealth services as an option to access services which assist with transportation barriers and safety concerns.

### **MINORITY AIDS INITIATIVE: Substance Use Disorder Treatment for Racial/Ethnic Minority Populations at High Risk for HIV/AIDS**

Under SAMSHA's Minority AIDS Initiative, funding was received to increase engagement in care for African American and Latino men who have sex with men, ages 18 - 59 with substance use disorders and/or co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders. The program's target population includes those individuals that are at a higher risk for becoming HIV positive or who are HIV positive and receiving HIV services and treatment. Funding for the program began initially in August 2019 and has been slated for 5 years. In partnership with Fulton County's Board of Health, the program's goal is to provide services and treatment to 500 participants throughout the duration of the program.

Between **July 2021 - September 2021, 19 new participants** have been introduced to the services. Currently **100%** of the **37** participants remain actively engaged. In response to COVID-19, the Social Service Coordinators began working and communicating with the consumers remotely by phone and via virtual platforms. Social services and linkages to community resources continued to increase during the third quarter, mainly through face to face contact as more services opened up for business. The majority of services are provided at the 10 Park Place SE location of the Board of Health, however the service navigators can choose to meet clients in neighborhood locations if the clients prefer not to connect at the Board of Health or virtually. Marketing for the program occurs via social media platforms, via the County's website and through various print media to community based organizations and the community at large. BHDD works with the Department of External Affairs and Communications to produce marketing materials to publicize the program and to provide awareness to the public regarding availability of treatment and social service support for individuals in need. The **Community Linkage Adherence Support Services (CLASS) Program** as it is known locally, completed year two on September 30, 2021 and has begun year three of the five year grant funded initiative. Program goals are inclusive of linking clients to behavioral health services and treatment for HIV and/or preventive services including PrEP to help reduce the spread of HIV along with retention of participants in treatment that may have dropped out of care. Additional services include assessments, housing assistance, food referrals, employment leads, transportation assistance via passes for MARTA and prevention education.

#### *Plans for 2021*

Goals for 2021 are to remain compliant within the grant's parameters including increasing the number of participants enrolled while linking clients to HIV services and treatment. Contracted partners will not only treat clients for mental health and substance use disorders, but will also refer any eligible clients for HIV screening and/or referrals for care.

Marketing incentives include facial masks, hand sanitizers and nylon bags with the CLASS logo to increase awareness and visibility of the program. Staff continue to attend community events while utilizing safety precautions against COVID in efforts to publicize the program and recruitment of participants.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

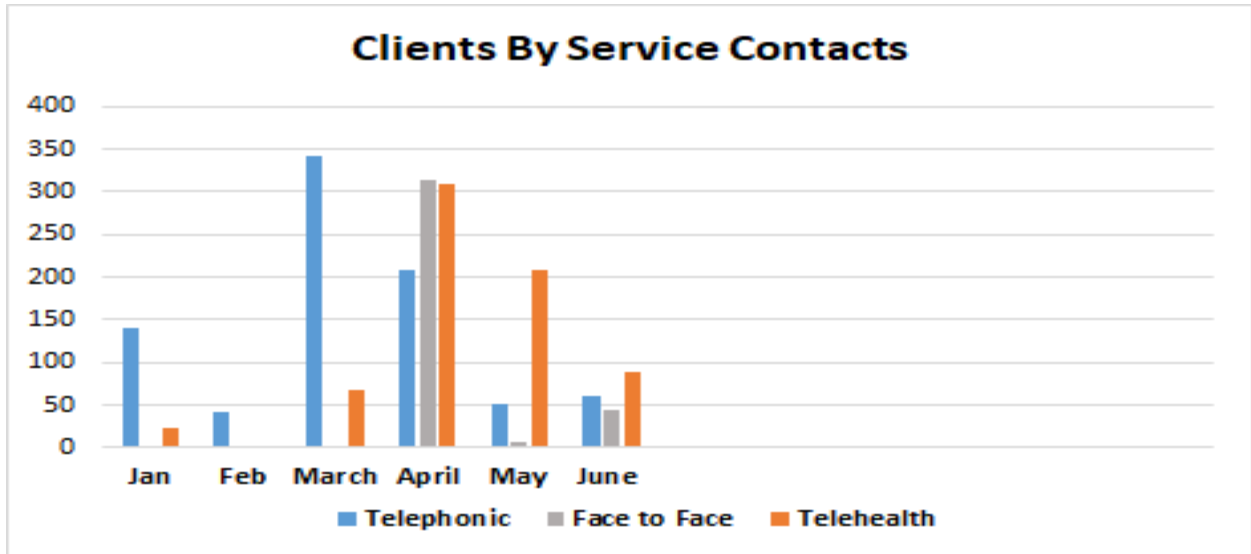
The Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities provides outpatient day service programs to adults with intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD) and is currently operating 3 programs in 2 locations: Central Training Center and North Training Center. South Training Center staff and individuals have temporarily been relocated to Central Training Center due to ongoing safety concerns at the facility. The emphasis of the IDD programs is to offer individualized services in the least restrictive environment and integrate those individuals into the community. Program offerings are as follows at each location:

- Diagnostic Assessments
- Individualized Treatment Plan
- Parent Support Group
- Individual and Group Training
- Prevocational Services
- Community Access Services
- Supported Employment Referral Services

Thus far in 2021, Developmental Disabilities served **100** individuals. The facilities reopened for in person services in June and the program continues to offer virtual services as well. IDD program bills for services through the Medicaid waiver program, State contracts and/or a self pay option and in 2021, only **\$12,243.40** has been collected. No revenue was collected during the second quarter. The COVID and strategic plan developed in 2020 were used as mechanisms to assist with the resumption of in person services. The strategic plan includes the expansion of service offerings for Supported Employment services, efforts to increase capacity of the IDD training centers, development of best practices and establishment of a parent educational program.

## **TELEHEALTH SERVICES & FACILITY REOPENING**

The IDD training centers successfully reopened for in-person services in June on a modified two or three day schedule and continued to offer the option of virtual services. From January 1 - June 30th, **283** telehealth/virtual sessions and **1,357** wellness calls have been completed with the IDD individuals. There were **289** face to face interactions through the 2nd quarter. Efforts towards the research and utilization of innovative service delivery approaches are an ongoing focus within the IDD population.



*Plans for 2021*

Enhance the services being offered for both virtual and in person services to incorporate community outings with the individuals. Obtain training to create Supported Employment services. Identify a space to relocate South Training Center or improve security and the building structure at the existing facility.

**HOUSING**

**PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING (PSH)**

The Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (BHDD) has partnered with Partners for HOME (PFH) and the Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA) to provide permanent housing solutions to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and in need of long-term supportive services.

We are currently in year 2 of the 5 year plan of supportive housing, **24** of the **550** units have been successfully obtained with **4** families and **20** individuals. In the third quarter of 2021, **2** clients moved into housing bringing the total number of clients housed in PSH to **24** clients. Fulton County provides “New Beginnings” boxes to each client that contains basic move-in essentials. To date, **100%** of the clients have maintained housing.

Encountering homelessness can often mean being shuffled from one shelter or service program to the next, or experiencing extended periods of time on the streets. The transition from the streets or

shelters usually requires significant adjustments in routine and lifestyle. This program offers long-term supportive services to individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness. The services include housing/tenant support, mental health treatment and case management services with a focus on housing stabilization skills to ensure that individuals and families maintain housing long-term in a safe and enriching living environment.

Each client is referred through the Atlanta Coordinated Entry System, which is managed by PFH. To be considered for PSH, a client must have a verified disability (Severe and Persistent Mental Illness - SPMI are included) and at least 365 days of homelessness. The PSH team connects with the client's referring Case Manager to ensure all required documentation is submitted to the Property Manager. The PSH team is introduced to the client during the client's initial property tour. If the client agrees to be housed at the identified location, they will submit an application for approval. The PSH team works with PFH and utility companies to resolve any arrears the clients may have in order to have the utilities turned on in the clients' names. Furniture is provided for each client through the Atlanta Furniture Bank and CORT Furniture.

Upon move-in, the client is officially assigned to the PSH team: a Care Coordinator and a Case Manager who works with them to maintain housing stability. The Care Coordinator will provide behavioral health support and the Case Manager will provide supportive services and connections to community resources.

After completion of the clinical and case management assessments for clients, service levels are assigned based on the assessments, and a client-driven Success Plan is developed. The time spent at each service level depends on the clients' completion of goals. Each Success Plan will be updated every 30 days.

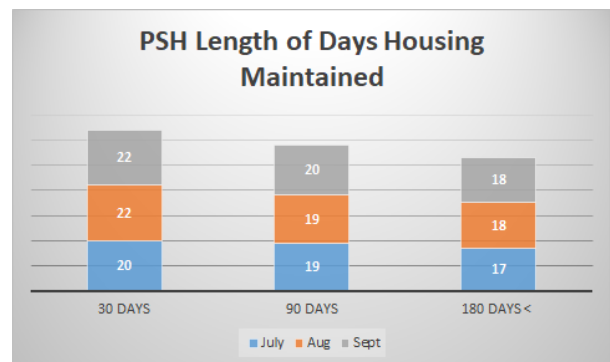
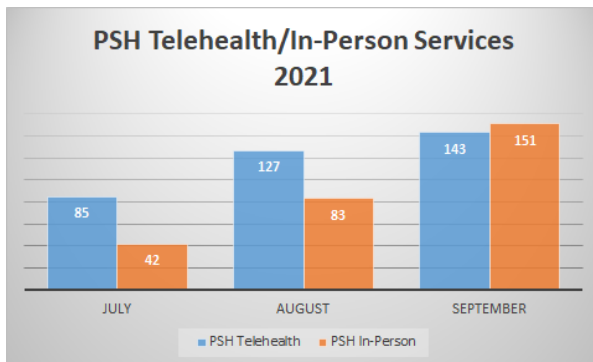
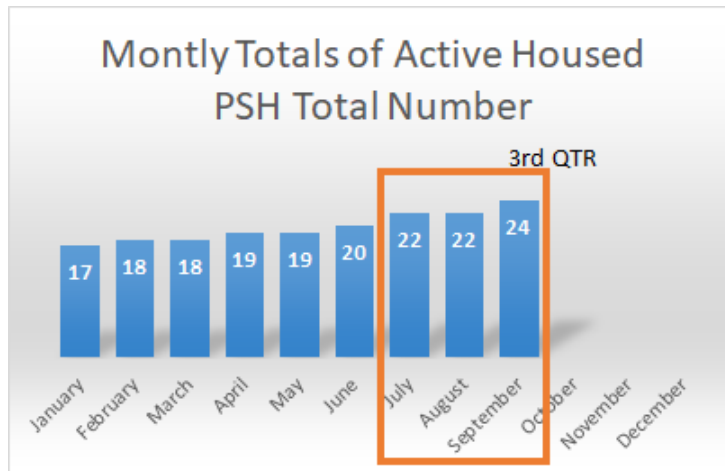
### **Service Levels**

#### **Case Management:**

Intensive: 3-4x's a week  
Moderate: 2-3x's a week  
Minimal: once a week  
Basic Check in: Bi-monthly

#### **Care Coordinator:**

Intensive: 2x's a week  
Moderate: once a week  
Minimal: Bi-monthly  
Basic Check-in once a month



### *Plans for 2021*

In 2021, **2** properties are slated to complete production and **1** property is pending approval increasing the number of PSH units to **47**. In the 4th quarter, **5** clients are slated to move into Adair Park Lofts, **12** clients are slated to move into Dalvigney Apartments and **30** clients are slated to move into Covenant House Apartments.

## **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING: ATLANTA HOUSING VOUCHERS**

The Department (BHDD) has partnered with Partners for HOME and the Atlanta Housing Authority to provide permanent housing solutions to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and in need of long-term supportive services.

This collaboration was a result of the case management services that were implemented at the Isolation Unit and the existing relationship fostered through the PSH Initiative. Partners for HOME (PFH) petitioned the Department to provide supportive housing services to a portion (**100**) of clients that transitioned from the Non-Congregate Hotel (*a hotel used during the pandemic to expand shelter beds*) to a long-term housing solution with an Atlanta Housing voucher. The clients need long-term supportive housing services as many of the clients have a long history of homelessness.

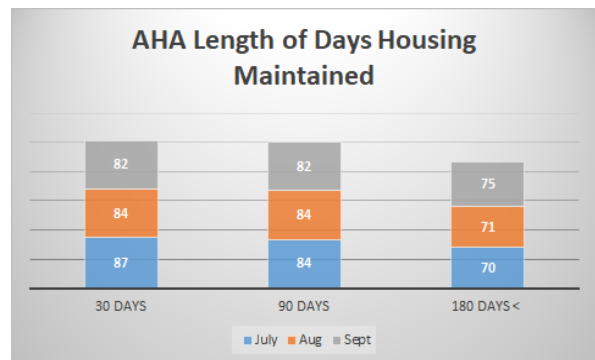
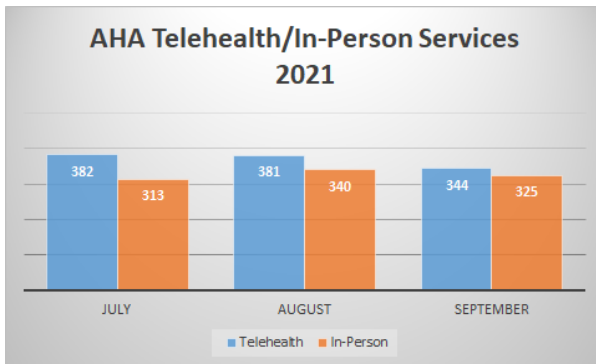
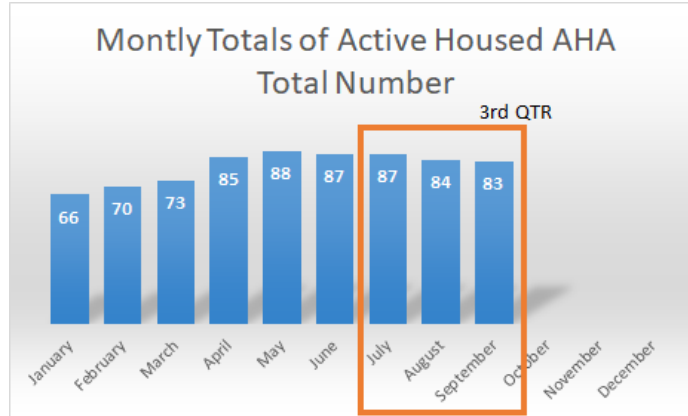
Supportive Housing services are provided in 2 phases, Housing Navigation and Housing Support services.

During the Housing Navigation Phase, the team assists the clients with identifying housing options through referrals to Open Doors, setting up tours of the units and assistance with the completion and submission of applications. Once clients are approved for housing, the team works with PFH and the utility companies to resolve arrears so that the clients can have utilities turned on in their names. Furniture was also provided for each client through the Atlanta Furniture Bank and CORT Furniture.

During the Housing Support phase, the client is assigned to a Supportive Housing team: a Care Coordinator and a Case Manager who works with them to maintain housing stability. Similar to the PSH program, the clients will receive a clinical and case management assessment, develop a Success Plan and are assigned a service level that would determine the supportive services offered by the team.

In the third quarter of 2021, **1** client moved into housing bringing the number of clients housed to **83**. The Supportive Housing team is providing services across **13** properties with **93%** of clients maintaining housing stability.





*Plans for 2021*

In 2021, the team will transition the remaining unhoused clients into housing. Fulton County DBHDD remains in constant communications with Partners for Home to determine how the department can continue to support the success of this program.

**SUPPORTIVE HOUSING: GEORGIA HOUSING VOUCHERS**

The Department (BHDD) was in discussion with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities with providing supportive housing services to **68** individuals who currently have Georgia Housing vouchers and are living in Fulton County. The Georgia Housing Voucher Program’s mission is to house, support, and sustain eligible individuals in need who have a severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), in order to prevent homelessness and promote independence and long-term recovery, in collaboration with our network of partners, efficiently and effectively. A requirement to maintain the voucher, the client must remain connected to a mental health provider. The Fulton County Supportive Housing Program would be a conduit for the clients to meet that obligation and receive supportive housing services.

*Plans for 2021*

Continue to work with the State to foster the relationship to provide Supportive Housing services for clients with a SPMI that have been awarded a GA Housing Voucher.

## **JUSTICE**

### **SCREENING AND RE-ENTRY UNIT**

The Department implemented a Screening and Re-Entry Unit (SRU) in Fulton County Jail as recommended by the Justice & Mental Health Task Force in September 2019. The goal of the SRU is to serve as an early detection to identify mental health concerns with inmates in the Fulton County jails by administering the Correctional Mental Health Screening (CMHS) to 100% of eligible bookings. Fulton County Information Technology and Strategy Departments created a secured Screening Database which scores and stores the screening information.

The Correctional Mental Health Screening (CMHS (M/W)) was identified as the validated screening tool with a separate questionnaire for men and women. The screening inquires about current symptomatology and any history of mental illness. Each screen takes about 3–5 minutes to administer. The presence of a mental health concern is noted when someone scores 5 or more.

NaphCare, the provider of medical and mental health services within Fulton County jails, administers the CMHS during intake as a part of their Mental Health assessment. NaphCare's staff uploads the screens hourly to the Fulton County Screening Database. In an effort to reduce the length of stay for those with mental health concerns in the Fulton County jail, Monday through Friday, the CMHS report is emailed to the Misdemeanor Mental Health court, PreTrial Services and the DBHDD's Re-Entry Teams. The report serves as a client referral method for these programs so that discharge planning can begin at booking.

#### *Plans for 2021*

In 2021, the Department will lend its database for use with the County's Familiar Faces's project to identify Fulton County citizens who are high utilizers of resources within the County.

### **RE-ENTRY TEAM**

In response to the growing number of incarcerated individuals with mental health concerns, the Department has implemented two Re-Entry teams within Fulton County jail. The adult Re-Entry team is placed at the Union City location that houses incarcerated women. (*The second Re-Entry team is highlighted in the programs for children, adolescents and emerging adults section.*) The program is completely voluntary and offers case management support services that begin a booking and transitions into the community upon the client's release. Individuals with behavioral health needs, including substance use disorders, mental illness, trauma histories, and extensive involvement in the criminal justice system are in the priority focus group for the program. Participants receive a continuum of care for up to one year post release to support positive choices, constructive behavior and accountability, thereby minimizing chances to reoffend.

The Key Measures and recommendations set forth for the Re-Entry Program are:

#### **KEY MEASURES**

- Reduce the number of individuals with mental illness booked into jail
- Shorten the average length of stay for individuals with mental illness in jail
- Increase the percentage of connection to care for individuals with mental illness upon release from jail and
- Lower rates of recidivism for individuals with mental illness

#### OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

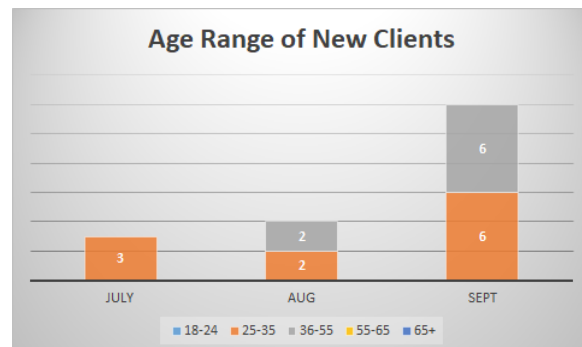
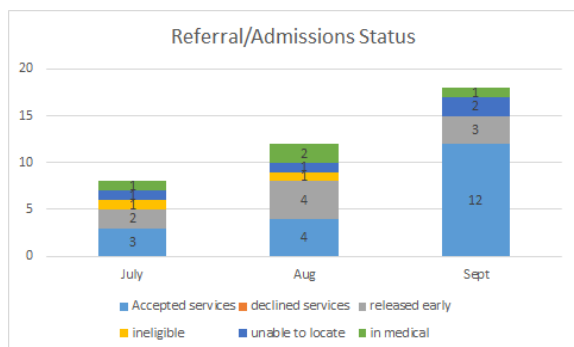
- Coordinate reentry services to track and monitor the validated jail mental health screen and reentry assessment tools along with discharge planning
- Connect reentry services at the Fulton County Public Defender’s Office with Fulton County Jail staff to increase the discharge planning capacity at the jail.

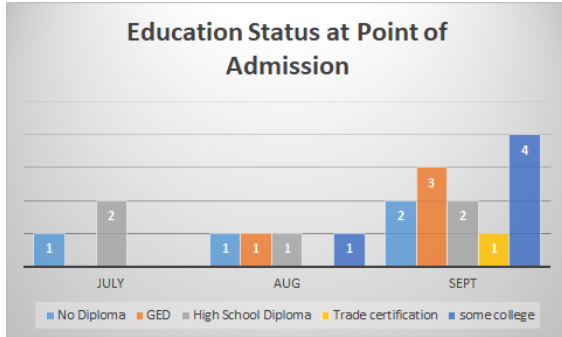
Collaborative meetings are held between BHDD, the Public Defender's Office, Pre Trial and NaphCare to discuss caseloads and referrals. The goal is to track every client identified with mental health concerns through the CMHS. The Collaboration Meetings are every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of each month with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday designated to meet with external partners (Mercy Care, Grady, etc) to discuss the most difficult to place clients.

The Department expanded the Screening Database that includes an electronic GAINS checklist and notes section that allows the collaborating departments (DBHDD Re-Entry Team, PD’s Mitigation Specialists, NaphCare, and PreTrial) to create a history under each client’s booking.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Re-Entry intake interviews are conducted virtually, several days a week, with the cooperation of the jail. Follow up services are completed in-person at the Union City jail.

#### Incarcerated Clients





### *Plans for 2021*

The expansion of service provision for released clients is key for the continuum of care. The goal is to enhance community connections, build skills and reduce criminogenic behaviors. Currently the teams connect the clients to community agencies for their service needs. Plans include group therapy, workshops and skills based classes being offered to clients in the Re-Entry program.

### **MISDEMEANOR MENTAL HEALTH COURT**

In collaboration with Magistrate & State Courts, the Misdemeanor Mental Health Court Program (MMC) was established on July 5, 2018. The MMC is a voluntary 3-5 month program to divert eligible misdemeanor citizen-defendants with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders from traditional sentencing to a supportive treatment program. Fulton DBHDD provides a treatment team to assist in creating and reinforcing treatment goals, provide case management and linkages to community resources (ex. assistance with housing, medical services, education, employment, mental health services and other community based service needs). The MMC program was designed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Protect public safety
- Reduce the incarceration and re-arrest of individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders
- Link individuals with mental health and/or substance use disorders to services
- Expect participants to adhere to program conditions and requirements

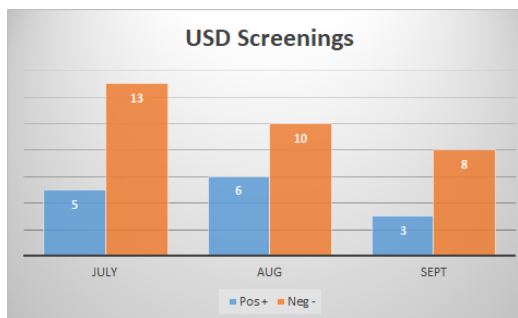
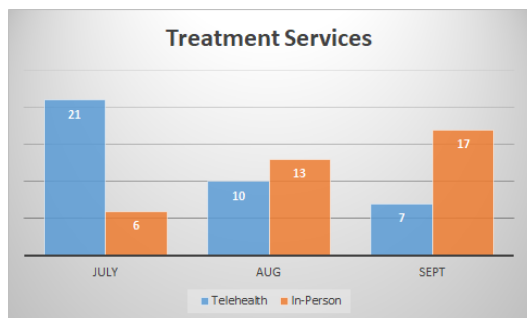
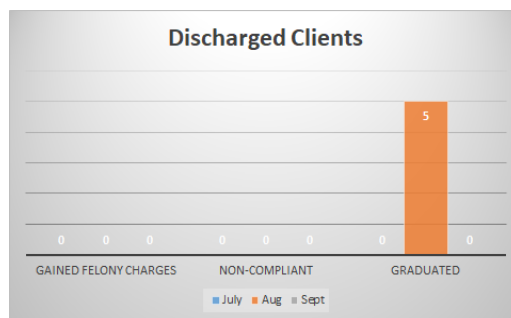
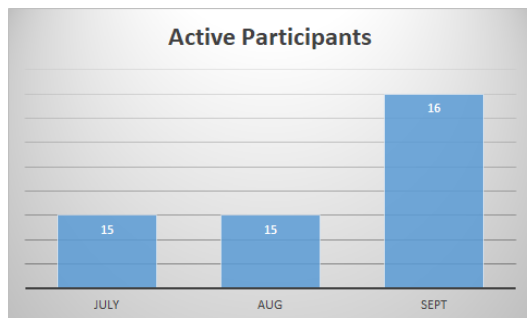
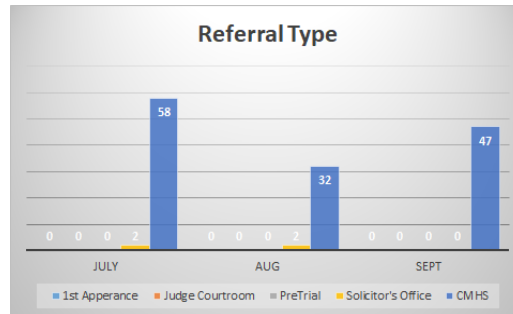
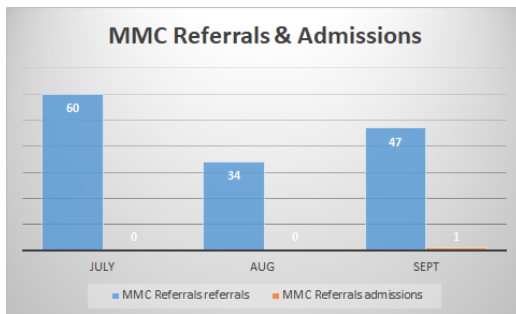
The treatment team includes a team lead, behavioral health clinician, and 2 case managers to perform the following support:

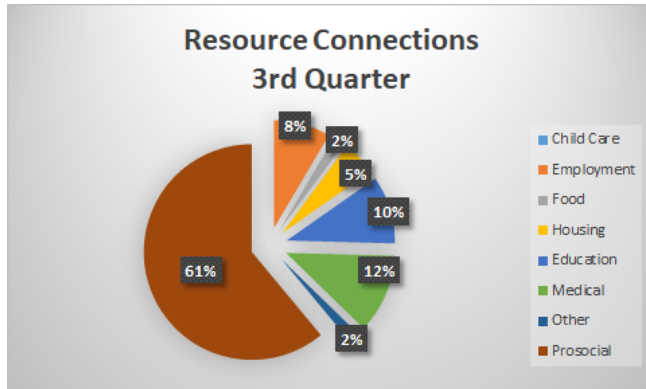
- Behavioral Health screenings and assessments
- Case Management Contact (face to face, collateral contact, and transportation)

- Referral and connection to housing providers, treatment providers (behavioral health and substance abuse), employment assistance, GED programs, SOAR case manager for Social Security benefits application
- Community monitoring for MMC compliance
- Support through motivational interviewing and strength-based case planning

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department implemented a modified schedule in order to protect the safety of the clients and staff. MMC courthouse sessions were moved to virtual and teleconference platforms to accommodate clients in the MMC program.

In the third quarter of 2021, the MMC team continued to provide a hybrid model of in-person/virtual services. To maintain social distancing, the court has also implemented a hybrid model requiring new participants and participants exhibiting concerning behavior to report in person to court and allowing compliant participants to attend court virtually. Peer Support and Morale Recognition Therapy (MRT) groups are being offered and the MMC team completed their training for Thinking for a Change.





### *Plans for 2021*

MMC team will shift all groups to in-person services. The Thinking for a Change group will be added to the list of services that are provided. The proposed group schedule will be Tuesdays and Fridays. The team will also conduct in-person “pop-ups” to clients as a part of the compliance of the Council of Accountability Court Judges (CACJ) certification.

### **DUI COURT PROGRAM**

The DUI Treatment Court is a post-conviction treatment program established in collaboration with the Department and State Court for individuals who have multiple violations of driving while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants. The DUI Court Program is a key component of the probation portion of a DUI sentence.

The mission of the Fulton County DUI Treatment Court is to enhance public safety and promote healthier lifestyles for repeat DUI offenders. The Court combines increased supervision and accountability with effective and intensive treatment.

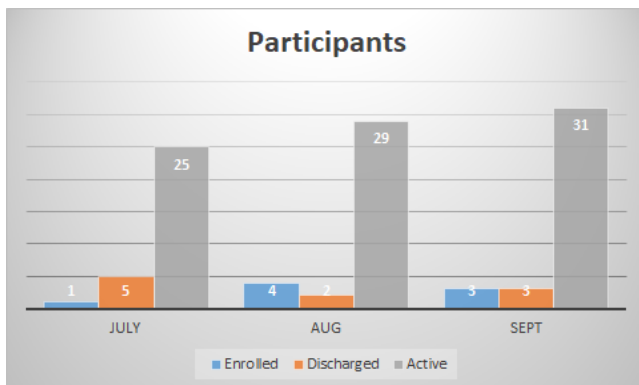
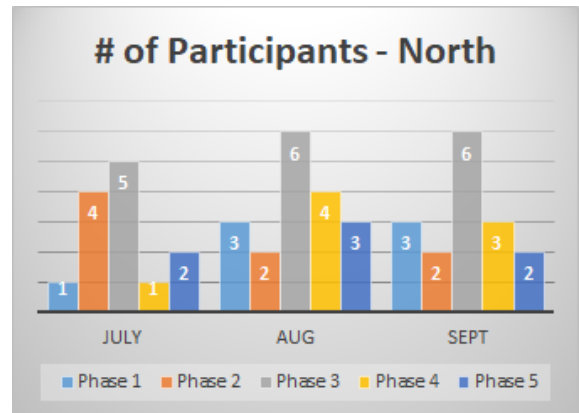
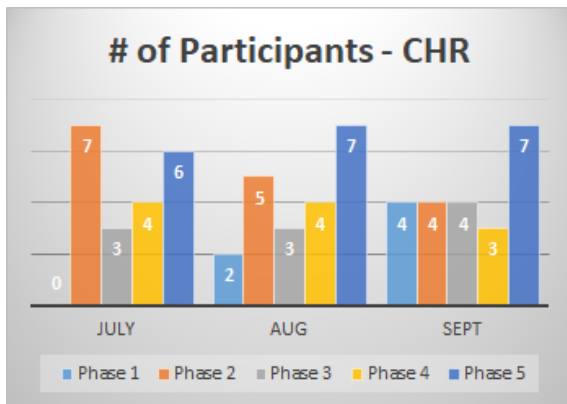
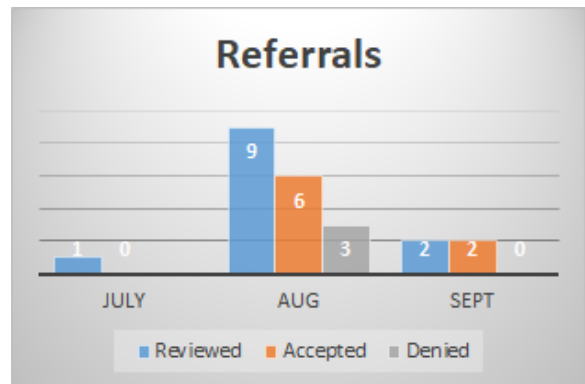
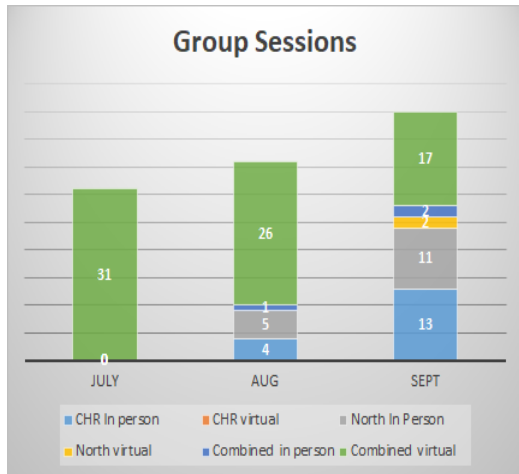
There are six (6) required components to participate in the DUI Treatment Court:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Completion of DDS DUI, Alcohol or Drug Risk Reduction Program
- Submission to random home visits
- Random drug testing
- Participation at compliance reviews
- Community support meetings such as AA/NA

The clinical treatment team is a vital aspect of the court program. The clinical team includes licensed therapists and certified addiction counselors to perform individual and group therapy. DUI services are provided at the North Fulton Service Center and the Center for Health and Rehabilitation.

As a result of the pandemic, treatment services were modified by implementing virtual groups and telehealth as a part of the service offerings. DUI treatment court also switched to a virtual platform.

In the third quarter of 2021, DUI court and treatment services shifted to a hybrid model of in-person and virtual groups and virtual individual therapy services.



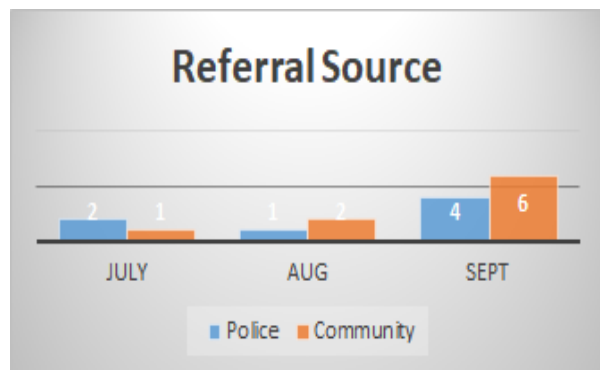
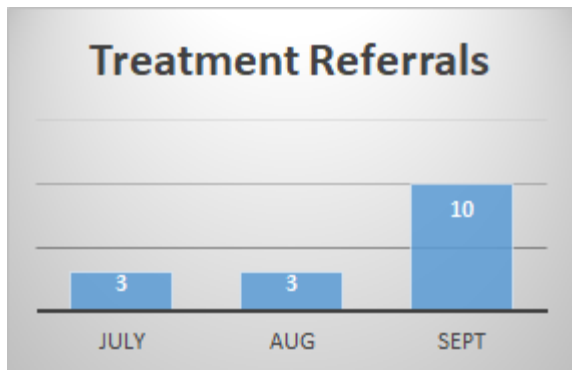
*Plans for 2021*

DUI services will remain hybrid until COVID -19 numbers begin to decrease and court services return to normal.

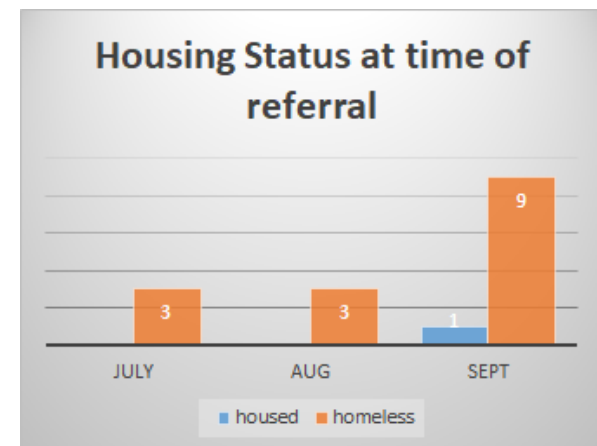
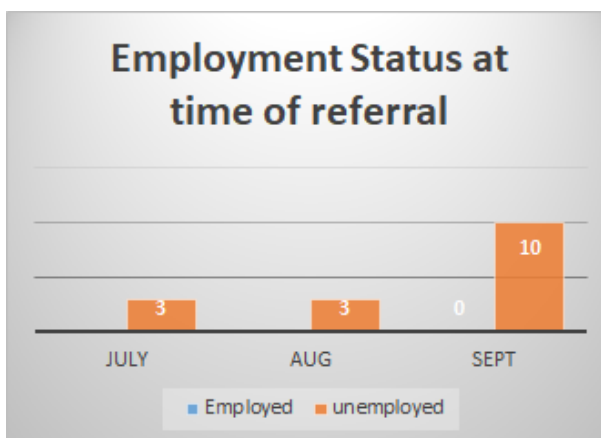
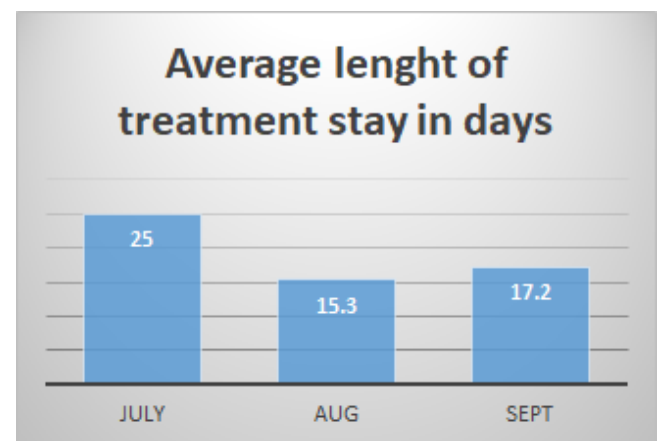
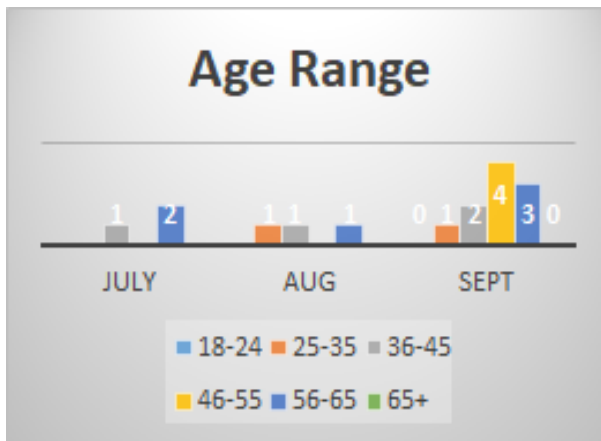
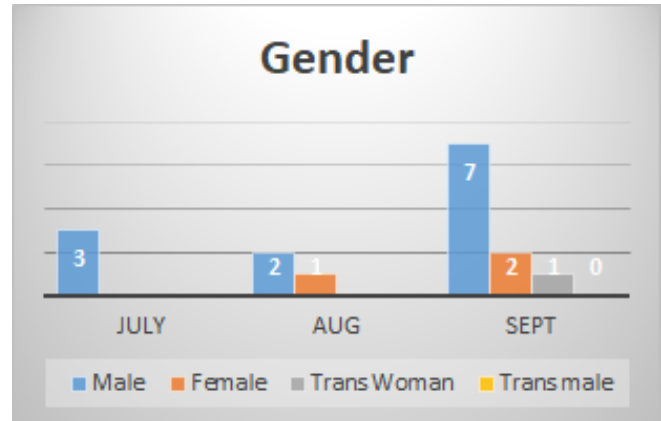
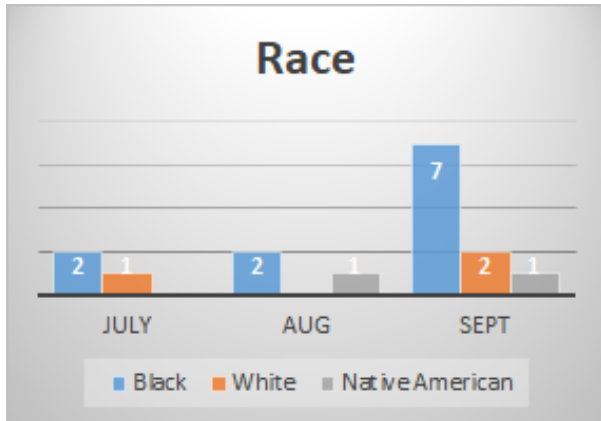
**POLICING ALTERNATIVES AND DIVERSION INITIATIVES (PAD)**

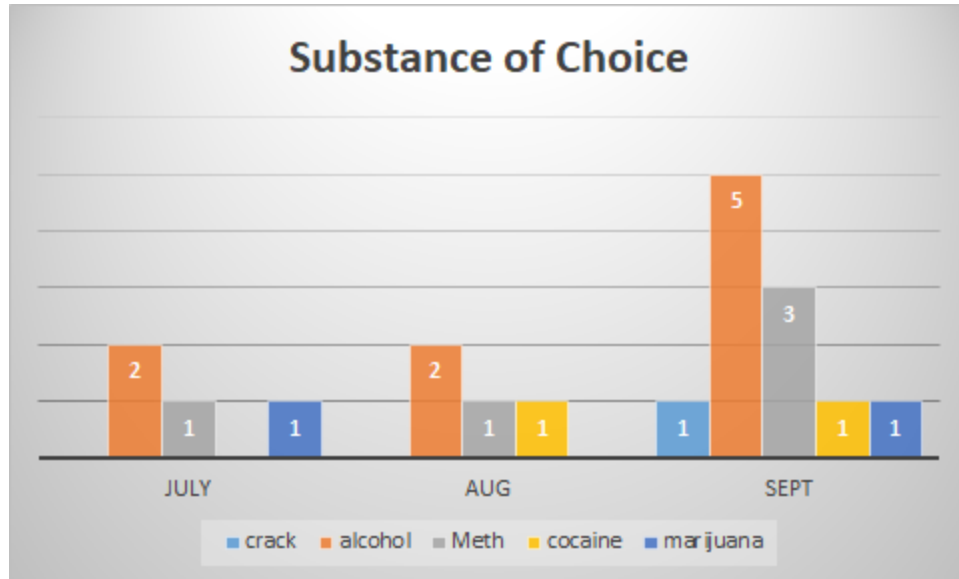
In October 2020, a grant was awarded a Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-based Program (COSSAP) from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance to expand Fulton County’s comprehensive efforts to identify, respond to, treat, and support those impacted by substance use disorders and reduce the impact on the criminal justice system. Fulton DBHDD and its partners will expand pre arrest diversion, case management, and training for law enforcement to the City of Atlanta and two other jurisdictions using the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) model; provide recovery support services including transitional or recovery housing through Fulton DBHDD and its local partners; and offer evidence-based treatment including medication-assisted treatment (MAT) through partner Grady Hospital.

In the 3rd quarter, PAD was able to refer **16** diversion clients to substance use treatment services. Weekly grant meetings are conducted to discuss the weaknesses and strengths of the program and ways to implement changes. Additionally, monthly meetings are held with the community treatment providers to ensure accurate collection of data and to address any questions they may have.









### *Plans for 2021*

The first year of the grant concluded on September 30, 2021. The referrals fell short of the 50 client goal for year 1. The second year of the grant begins in our 4th quarter. The scope of work for this grant will be expanded to include referrals from the Public Defenders office for individuals with substance use charges that could have been diverted, referrals from officers that respond to overdose calls but do not transport the individual to the hospital, and referrals from staff at Grady Hospital that receive overdose persons from police drop offs.

## **OPIOID/SUBSTANCE USE**

### **RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID CRISIS**

In response to the opioid crisis in 2018, Fulton County created a position to focus on combating the growing drug epidemic within the County. Under the direction of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Opioid Coordinator serves as the point of contact between Fulton and community organizations, courts, state and federal officials. A detailed response plan was developed in order to confront the problem from various angles which included plans to provide community awareness and education in various sectors of the community including students, families and senior citizens. The plan incorporated more targeted awareness surrounding safe drug disposal for prescription medicines and utilizing the drug disposal boxes that are strategically placed around the County. Other components include developing and expanding the contract with Grady Behavioral Health Clinic to offer medication assisted treatment and therapeutic interventions to prevent drug overdoses and relapse. Text 4 Help, (formerly Text - for- Help) was expanded to include all public high schools and middle schools within Fulton County's School district. In order to align with the State's plan addressing the opioid epidemic, the plan included

expansion of services, Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program (ODMAP). The service is another tool for first responders to visually pinpoint drug overdoses in real time and provide immediate response to overdose spikes and trends in illicit drug patterns and areas of high frequency utilizing analytics, such as heat maps while recording data. As the largest County in Georgia, several of the municipalities are connected with ODMAP and moving forward into 2021, the plan is to work with the remaining first responders in municipalities that have yet to sign on to the program. Work continues on various levels including being an integral component with the Coalition for the Georgia Child Victims of the Opioid Epidemic, The Voices for Prevention Network and the Community Education and Awareness Committee with the State’s Opioid Response Coalition.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there has been substantial increases in drug overdose deaths across the United States, primarily driven by rapid increases in overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids excluding methadone (hereafter referred to as synthetic opioids), likely illicitly manufactured fentanyl. The largest increase was recorded from March 2020 to May 2020, coinciding with the implementation of widespread mitigation measures for the COVID-19 pandemic. The most recent provisional data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) indicate that approximately **81,230** drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in the 12-months ending in May 2020. This represents a worsening of the drug overdose epidemic in the United States and is the largest number of drug overdoses for a 12-month period ever recorded. After declining 4.1% from 2017 to 2018, the number of overdose deaths increased 18.2% from the 12-months ending in June 2019 to the 12-months ending in May 2020.

Although the western United States experienced the highest increase of overdose deaths, Georgia saw an increase between 10 and 19% higher incidence of overdose deaths. The number of fentanyl-involved deaths in Georgia more than doubled from 2019 to 2020, according to data from the state’s public health department. The synthetic opioid played a part in killing 803 Georgians in 2020, compared to 392 in 2019.

**Fentanyl Related Deaths From 2019 - 2020**

<b>Georgia County</b>	<b>Fentanyl Related Deaths in 2020</b>	<b>Fentanyl Related Deaths in 2019</b>
<b>Fulton</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Cobb</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Dekalb</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>34</b>

<b>Gwinnett</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>26</b>
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As stated previously, the global pandemic has contributed to the increase of opioid related drug overdose deaths. In efforts to combat the crisis, virtual programs continue to be conducted via various platforms to the community to increase awareness and provide prevention education and offer resources regarding treatment and behavioral health services.

*Plans for 2021*

Plans for 2021 are to conduct educational and prevention awareness campaigns to target high risk communities regarding opioids, especially illicit fentanyl. Additional strategies include connecting residents to referral sources such as medication assisted treatment, support groups and sources for receiving naloxone and working with other harm reduction programs. Weekly social media submissions will continue to focus on substance abuse, recovery and treatment via the County’s social media platforms. During Recovery Month, on September 28, 2021 a virtual Recovery Fair was held via the County’s YouTube channel to highlight treatment and recovery resources throughout the County. Moving forward, the Grady MAT clinic is currently developing plans to expand treatment at the North Fulton Service Center to ease barriers for residents in that area.

**MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT SERVICES**

BHDD continues to provide resources for residents with substance use disorders through a contractual agreement with Grady Health Systems Behavioral Health Clinic. The collaboration with Grady’s Medication Assisted Outpatient program has provided services to **50** Fulton County residents with opioid use disorders from **July 1, 2021 – September 30, 2021** for a total of **103** for the last 9 months. Of the clients seen during the third quarter, **12** received verbal interventions within the hospital. There were **20** clients that received induction doses of buprenorphine and **18** new residents seen in the outpatient clinic for follow up, either walk-ins or follow up from the hospital. The program housed within Grady’s Behavioral Health Clinic, allows residents to have access to the full array of services offered by the clinic. Included in the services are individual and group therapy with licensed clinicians and peer counselors, Medication Assisted Outpatient Therapy (MAOT) is provided in the form of buprenorphine/naloxone or Suboxone, and connections to local 12-step support groups to assist in sustaining long term recovery.

With restrictions still remaining in effect due to COVID, limited outpatient services remain in effect for those in need of labs, injections, medication assisted treatment, and emergent symptoms. All precautions are taken to keep the clients and staff safe from infection, including provision of masks and social distancing in waiting rooms and offices. The clinic limits and discourages visitors and has asked patients to arrive no more than 15 minutes prior to their appointment. Telephonic outreach continues daily to those with scheduled appointments to determine health status and offer virtual visits, prescribe medications, peer support and conduct other services as needed.

Education is provided around COVID testing, self-care, emergencies and other support hotlines. Telephonic and audio/visual visits are offered for all services, including some virtual groups.

### *Plans for 2021*

The contract with Grady Behavioral Health has been renewed for 2021 with provisions of resources and treatment for Fulton County residents that are in need of opioid use disorder treatment. All necessary parties have signed and received copies of the contract renewal. Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities continues to make referrals as appropriate for services along with providing community awareness for all residents in need. Plans continue to be developed to increase capacity of the clinic by expanding services at the North Fulton Service Center location to provide medication assisted treatment. Currently the space has been identified at the location for the expansion.

## **PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS & EMERGING ADULTS (18 – 24)**

### **CORE SERVICES**

The Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities provides core outpatient behavioral health services for children, adolescents and emerging adults (18- 24) experiencing mental illness and/or substance use disorders. Core outpatient behavioral health services include:

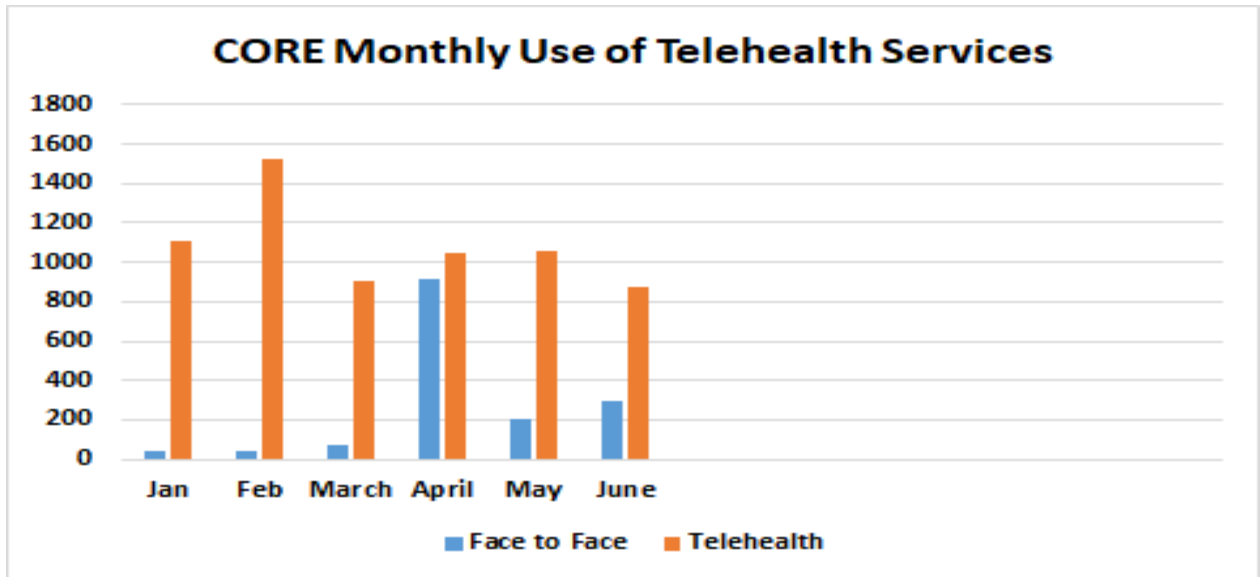
- Psychiatric Evaluation
- Behavioral Health Assessments
- Case Management & Skills Building
- Nursing Evaluations
- Individual, Family and Group Counseling
- Peer Support Services
- Diagnostic Assessment
- Addiction Services
- Crisis Intervention

The Department provides child, adolescent, and emerging adult services from 3 locations: Adamsville Regional Health Center, Oak Hill Child, Adolescent & Family Center, and North Fulton Service Center. Services were provided through use of telehealth networks and in person through June 30, 2021 serving **793** individuals with a total **8,093** client visits. The team successfully launched a centralized scheduling line for appointments as well as a same day appointment model.

### **TELEHEALTH SERVICES & FACILITY REOPENING**

A phased reopening plan was introduced in May for the 3 sites for in-person services for clients who prefer that option and telehealth services continued to be offered as well. Through June 30th, **8,093** service contacts have been executed either by face to face (**1,571**) and/or

telehealth/telephonic means (**6,522**). Telehealth services account for **80%** of the preferred service delivery method through the 2nd quarter.



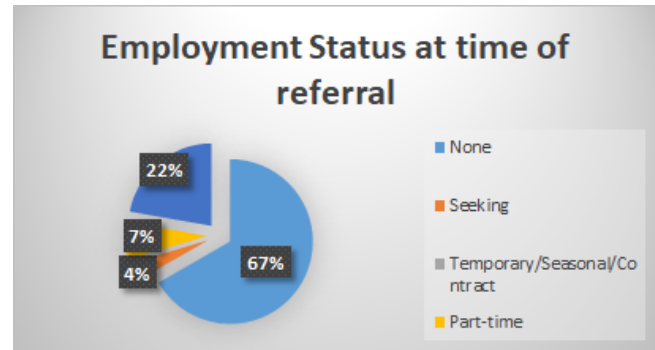
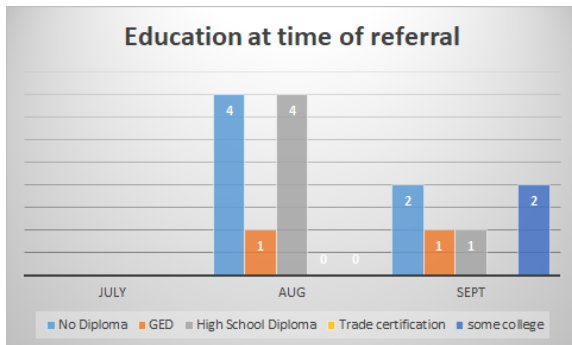
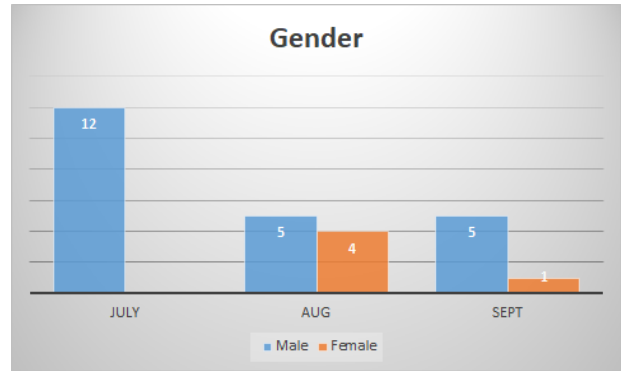
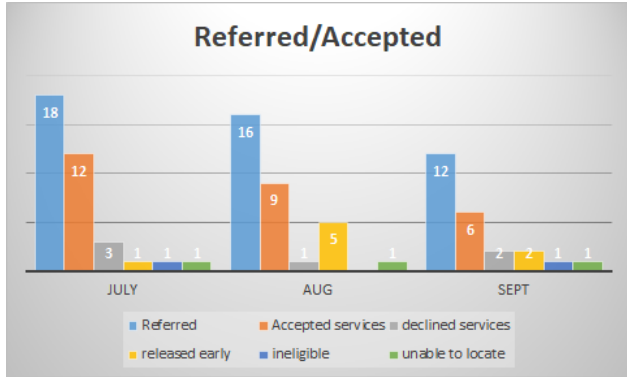
#### *Plans for 2021*

The Team is continuing to assess the need to open the locations for in person services for more days each week. The IT Departments are working together to improve the infrastructure at the C & A locations.

#### **JUSTICE**

##### **RE-ENTRY TEAMS**

The second Re-Entry team focuses on the emerging adult population, males and females 18-24. *(More detailed programmatic explanation is highlighted in the programs for adults section)* In the third quarter of 2021, **27** new clients agreed to enroll in the Re-Entry program. The emerging adult team is currently providing services for **64** clients, **28** incarcerated clients and **36** released clients.



### *Plans for 2021*

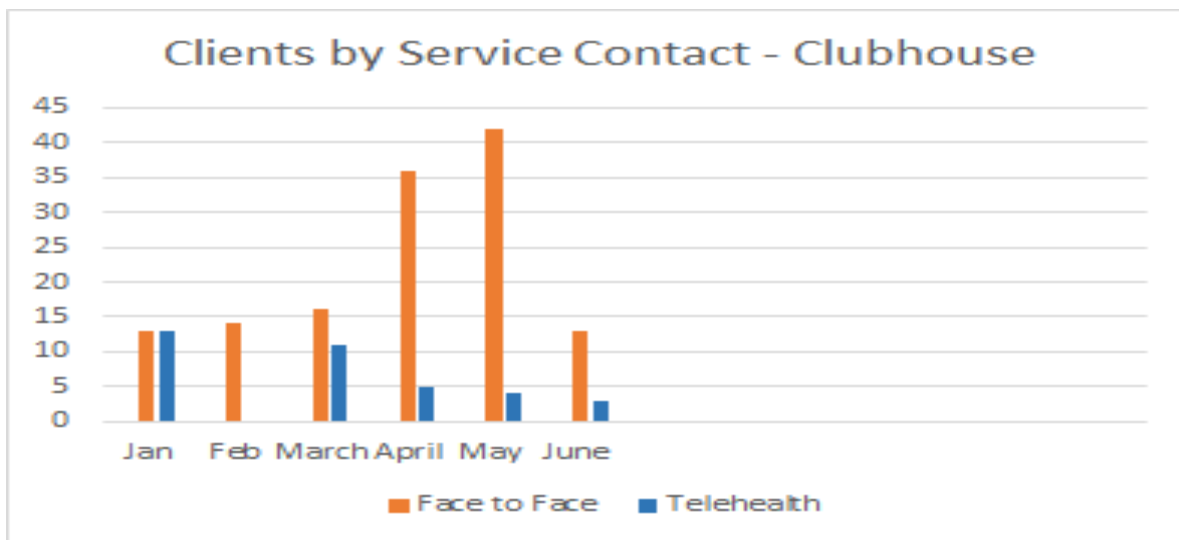
The expansion of service provision for released clients is key for the continuum of care. The goal is to enhance community connections, build skills and reduce criminogenic behaviors. Currently the

teams connect the clients to community agencies for their service needs. Plans include group therapy, workshops and skills based classes being offered to clients in the Re-Entry program.

### **SUBSTANCE USE/SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS**

**CLUBHOUSE GRANT PROGRAM** The Recovery Support Clubhouse for Youth offers services to adolescents between 13 & 17 during nontraditional hours in an effort to provide exposure to alternative choices to encourage drug free activities, education and life skill building. The Clubhouse is funded through a federal grant managed by the State of Georgia. The program served **17** adolescents through the second quarter.

The Clubhouse reopened for in person services at the end of the first quarter with the goal to increase engagement with the participants, their families and the staff. The staff maintains regular contact with the participants via telephone, in person visits and utilization of telehealth options. Through June 30th, the staff completed **12** telehealth and **91** face to face sessions with the participants and their families, including individual counseling, group counseling, wellness checks, parent education, substance abuse education, case management, community engagement activities, tutoring, and nutrition classes.



#### *Plans for 2021*

With new leadership in place at the Clubhouse for Youth, monthly open houses are planned in order to increase the number of participants. The Clubhouse program has increased marketing efforts throughout the community with a benchmark goal of 25 participants by the end of the year.

#### **TEXT 4 HELP**

In October 2017, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners entered into an agreement with the non-profit organization Linking Efforts Against Drugs (LEAD), as a part of the ongoing efforts to



combat the opioid crisis. Under the agreement, the program officially began in January 2018, with **5** Fulton County high schools in the pilot. Since that time, expansion of the program has enabled all **17** Fulton County public high schools along with **19** middle schools to provide the confidential texting program to all its students free of cost.

Text 4 Help allows students to connect confidentially through text messages to licensed mental health professionals for resources and referrals 24 hours a day/7 days per week. From July through September of 2021, there were **33** text messages delivered to the clinicians on call, with all texts receiving responses back under three minutes. As a part of CHRIS 180's contract with Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities, the contractor provides licensed clinicians daily to receive and respond to text messages. The number of conversations initiated to clinicians has increased compared to the same time last year where only **18** messages were received. Along with technology changes, LEAD introduced a new app in March 2021 for utilization by clinicians to decrease the possibility of missed text messages and alerts. To improve the reporting process for the program, LEAD also integrated a new reporting portal in February 2021 that allows for reports to be received with real time data that is refreshed daily. As LEAD continues to improve technology with the user portal, the goal is to provide accurate and easier access to the data.

#### *Plans for 2021*

Moving forward into 2021, plans have been set to increase marketing of the Text 4 Help program within the schools with the students and school faculty. Various marketing items have been ordered by Fulton County School district to remind students about the program, including face masks and hand sanitizer. Reminders are being delivered to the students during morning highlights and announcements twice a week for all of the schools along with new marketing materials sent home with students for parents. Conversations between DBHDD and Atlanta Public Schools continue regarding implementation of a pilot program for Text 4 Help for the Spring semester of the 2021 - 2022 school year. Fulton County's legal team has drafted the MOU with revisions currently being added and reviewed. The Fulton Academy of Virtual Excellence has been added to the program.

#### **SCHOOL BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The School Based Mental Health model implemented in June 2020, is inclusive of trauma informed care, therapy sessions for individuals, family and groups. BHDD entered into a contractual agreement with CHRIS 180 and with sub-contractor Summit Counseling Center, Inc. to provide the services within the Fulton County School system. Schools were divided between the agencies with **11** existing schools along with an additional **24** schools for CHRIS 180 and **23** unserved schools being assigned to Summit to ensure students could receive services.

A major priority of CHRIS 180's is to provide trauma informed training in all schools served in the Fulton County district. Between July 1, and September 30, 2021, the total number of new referrals to CHRIS 180 and Summit Counseling was **439**, new clients enrolled in services was **282** and uninsured clients receiving services was **210** between the partnering organizations. Summer services were provided via telehealth, in person in the community, and/or in person at the provider site closest to the students and families.

#### *Plans for 2021*

Plans for 2021 focuses on increasing the number of parent and student groups to improve engagement, introductions to new on-site partners, psychoeducation and resource linkage.

All relevant school staff will continue to receive hybrid models of Trauma Stars Training during the 2021 school year until all schools have been trained. Plans also include collaborating with school partners to reach a higher percentage of parents during school events year round to increase engagement with the programs and students.

### **COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING**

The 3rd quarter of 2021 was exceptionally busy & productive for the team at the **Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (BHDD)**. During the quarter, the Department of BHDD hosted two groundbreaking events that recognized September as both **National Recovery Month & National Suicide Prevention Month**.

Of even more significance, the Department of BHDD began the implementation of a federal grant, which was the result of a collaboration with the **Fulton County Department of External Affairs & Fulton County Grants Office**. The grant award was for \$3.9 million dollars from the **US Department of Health & Human Service, Office of Minority Health**. The grant is titled ***Advancing Health Literacy to Enhance Equitable Community Responses to COVID - 19 (AHL) Initiative***. The Department was notified at the end of June that we were awarded the funding, and the grant period lasts for two years.

Highlights of the grant will enable Fulton County BHDD to achieve the following:

- Formation of a Community Coalition Board (CCB) led by a non-governmental, community-based organization. The CCB will meet regularly to discuss the data related to minority communities, issues impacting vulnerable communities, their needs, and how to best connect individuals with services.
- Implementation of a primary and behavioral health integration strategy to address the current needs resulting from COVID-19, as well as pre-existing & future needs in minority and socially vulnerable populations.
- Deployment of a mobile unit in minority and underserved neighborhoods; connect and build rapport with residents; mitigate distrust issues surrounding the medical community;

address stigma related to behavioral health; provide education, information, linkages to services; empower individuals to recognize signs & symptoms of physical and emotional health needs; and provide information and linkages related to COVID-19. The mobile unit will serve to promote sustained engagement with minority and socially vulnerable neighborhoods & individuals.

- Creation of a team of six Outreach Workers who will become experts on the underserved and minority populations in their district and receive culturally specific training. Translation services will be provided. Acknowledging that people of a community know their neighborhood best, there will be targeted efforts to recruit community members for staff roles.
- Recruit Resident Workers who speak the languages of the communities served to canvas hard to reach neighborhoods through door-to-door engagement to provide education & information related to COVID-19.
- Use of an Organizational Health Literacy Initiative for primary and behavioral health providers that includes train-the-trainer, evidenced-based teach backs, toolkits/discussion guides, and plain language materials in order to align with the Healthy People 2030 objectives related to provider/patient communication.
- Implementation of a dynamic online culturally responsive HUB as a resource for utilizing the evidence-based model of community care coordination that focuses on addressing social determinants of health. The site will be user-friendly, written in plain language, provide translation services for individuals with limited English proficiency, and be simple to navigate. Outreach Workers can provide in-the-field access to those with limited technology resources.
- Hosting community events with topics related to COVID-19 & behavioral health.
- Conducting a culturally and linguistically sensitive visibility & outreach campaign.

## **WEEKLY SOCIAL MEDIA SUBMISSIONS**

The Department continues to partner with the **Fulton County Department of External Affairs, Office of Communications** to post social media messages that convey various topics centered on mental health, addiction & recovery, child & adolescent issues, and self-care. The social media posts contain graphics and photos, and instructs the public on how to contact the Department to gain access to services and resources. Assigned staff are responsible for submitting new topics weekly that contain content for social media. Plans are in place to continue posting helpful and relevant behavioral health information to social media on a weekly basis. Being active on social media is an effective tool to increase community awareness regarding services offered by Fulton County Government.

## **NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH EVENTS**

September is nationally recognized as **National Recovery Month**, and the Fulton County Department of BHDD held events to recognize the importance of “Recovery” for the millions of Americans struggling with substance use, and who are attempting to enter sobriety.

During September, the Department received a proclamation from the **Fulton County Board of Commissioners** recognizing National Recovery Month. The Department also hosted a virtual Community Conversation, which was broadcast via Zoom, on suicide since September also is National Suicide Prevention Month (*see below under **“IN THE KNOW: NEWS YOU CAN USE!” WEBINAR SERIES***).

The Department of BHDD also hosted a one-hour virtual Recovery Fair titled **“RECOVERED, CONNECTED, & THRIVING THRU COMMUNITY!”** This event was televised both on Zoom and the Fulton County Government YouTube Channel, and featured 10 community-based organizations & Fulton County government agencies discussing the services that they can offer individuals who are seeking to enter recovery for substance use issues. The participants in the Recovery Fair were the following:

1. Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (BHDD)
2. Fulton County Department of Arts & Culture
3. Mary Hall Freedom Village
4. Trinity Community Ministries
5. NAMI Northside
6. Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network
7. Grady Behavioral Health
8. R2ISE to Recovery
9. Fulton County Clubhouse for Youth
10. Fulton County Public Library

This excellent event also was made possible by the outstanding collaboration between the Department of BHDD and the **Fulton County Department of External Affairs** to host the “Community Conversation” & Recovery Fair.

### **IN THE KNOW: NEWS YOU CAN USE! WEBINAR SERIES**

On January 7, 2021, the Fulton County Department of BHDD launched a new bi-weekly webinar series titled: **“IN THE KNOW: NEWS YOU CAN USE!”** This features both BHDD staff, and external experts in the behavioral health field, discussing practical advice on coping with common behavioral health occurrences that impact most people.

During the 3rd quarter of 2021, BHDD hosted the following webinars:

- July 8, 2021 - “New Developments in the World of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (IDD)”
- July 22, 2021 - “Don’t Despair - Take Control!: Dealing With Depression & Other Mood Disorders”

The webinars continue to be well-received by the public and community partners. Since people are on vacation, or preparing for schools to reopen in August, BHDD did not host an August webinar.

Instead, we hosted a Community Conversation in September titled, “**On the Brink - Making The Choice to Live**”. This one-hour panel discussion was broadcast on Zoom, and featured panelists sharing compelling testimonies about dealing with suicide & finding the strength to The broadcast was held in recognition of September as **National Suicide Prevention Month**.

### **NEXT STEPS FOR 2021**

In 2021, Fulton BHDD aims to use social media to implement behavioral health interventions that will reach a broader population, specifically those who have been adversely affected by the COVID pandemic.

### **ANNUAL OBSERVANCES**

#### **May 2021 - Mental Health Month**

The Department of BHDD received a Proclamation from the Fulton County Board of Commissioners that recognized May 2021 as **Mental Health Awareness Month**. Additionally, the Department’s webinar series will coincide with the National Mental Health Month’s theme “**Tools to Thrive**” and are entitled “Creating Safer and Stronger Communities Through Harm Reduction” and “Moving Through Grief and Loss”.

#### **MENTAL HEALTH MONDAYS**

During the month of May, to culminate with mental health awareness month, mental health Mondays was launched. Every Monday on a rotating basis BHDD submitted materials to the Department of External Affairs to be included in Fulco News, One Fulton, the County’s website and social media pages. The recorded materials included information and practical tips for citizens and employees to take care of their mental health.

#### **October 2021 - Domestic Violence Month & National Make A Difference Day**

The Department will join the District Attorney’s office to request a Proclamation from the Fulton County Board of Commissioners to proclaim the month of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The Department will collaborate with the Domestic Violence community organizations to provide a presentation for the webinar series. The Webinar Series during the month of October will include topics centered around Domestic Violence.

#### **Dream Out Loud Project, Alchemy Sky Foundation**

In addition, BHDD is currently planning a program for October to premiere a video titled “**Dream Out Loud**”, featuring adults with intellectual & developmental disabilities (IDD) who receive services at our facilities. The video is a collaborative effort with the **Alchemy Sky Foundation**, a non-profit organization dedicated to bridging the healing power of music to those who need it.

Our plans are to premiere the video to IDD individuals enrolled in our services, and their families. This event will be held on October 22, 2021, which is **National Make A Difference Day**.

If you have any questions or require additional information the Department can be reached at 404-613-7013. Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.

cc: Dr. Pamela Roshell, Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Health and Human Services