Hurricane Florence
Alliance supports Cumberland recovery

Months after Hurricane Florence caused catastrophic flooding in Cumberland County, where many people are still recovering from 2016’s Hurricane Matthew, Alliance staff are continuing our assistance to people affected by the disaster.

When the emergency shelters were scheduled to close in early October, many people affected by the storm still had no place to go. Alliance staff worked to rapidly rehouse those coming out of the disaster shelters through a partnership with the Back@Home program, an initiative of the NC Department of Health and Human Services to transition families from shelters or unsafe housing to safe and sustainable longer-term housing.

“We assessed about 130 people total in the shelters and we’ve housed about 25 families,” said Terrasine Gardner, Alliance’s Community Relations Manager in Cumberland County. Gardner said other families have been transitioned into the care of Volunteers of America, with whom Alliance is partnering to connect people with community resources, care packages and mattress delivery.

Alliance also facilitated the distribution of 72 mattresses that were donated by Good360 for people transitioning from shelters through the rapid rehousing efforts.

“One of the things that we are already most proud of with our work with Back@Home is that when they closed the last shelter, everybody that was in that shelter had someplace to go. Nobody left into homelessness,” said Alliance Senior Vice President–Community Relations Ann Oshel.

Because life in a shelter is very stressful, people with resources and options got out of the shelters as soon as they could manage it, Oshel said. “For the more than 50 households that were left in the shelter at the end, these were the people with the least resources and

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**Medicaid Transformation in North Carolina**

Alliance CEO Rob Robinson discusses the 1115 Waiver and the ways in which it will affect the delivery of public healthcare in North Carolina.

Most of you know that our state is in the process of transforming the way that public healthcare is managed. The foundation of this transformation is a new Medicaid waiver – the 1115 Waiver, which was recently approved by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

**What the Waiver Does**

The 1115 Waiver authorizes North Carolina to transition to Medicaid managed care and to integrate physical health, behavioral health and pharmacy benefits for people insured by Medicaid. Learn more about the waiver and its approval.

**How the Waiver Works**

As part of North Carolina’s transition to Medicaid whole person care, the waiver provides the authority to create Tailored Plans to serve people with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) or higher intensity behavioral health needs, and allows creation of a specialized behavioral health home model to ensure strong care management for those individuals. Also, to support broader state efforts to combat the opioid crisis and improve access to treatment, the waiver allows more flexibility in developing treatments for substance use disorder.

**What this Means for Alliance**

Alliance expects to be authorized by the state to operate a Tailored Plan for people with high intensity behavioral health needs, and individuals who need long-term care, and we have been preparing ourselves for this for many months. As the operator of a Tailored Plan, our job will be to manage all of the physical, behavioral and pharmacy care for the people we serve.

**The Timeline**

Based on our state’s current timeline, Tailored Plans will begin operation in the middle of 2021.

Since its beginning in 2012, Alliance’s vision has been to be a leader in transforming the delivery of whole person care in the public sector. We are excited about our future as our future as the operator of a North Carolina Tailored Plan, and about the opportunity to provide more comprehensive, holistic care for our members.

Please check out future issues of Alliance InTouch for updates on Medicaid transformation in North Carolina and Alliance’s progress in its transition to a Tailored Plan.

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**Cumberland Strong**

The Cumberland Strong website is a clearinghouse for people to provide donations and to volunteer to help the recovery process in Cumberland County. The site also provides a resource for residents who need help as they transition back to their homes.

[www.cumberlandstrong.com](http://www.cumberlandstrong.com)
Alliance recently went live with Jiva, a population health management (PHM) platform that will allow us to improve our care management efforts to promote better outcomes. Alliance already has the lowest rate of emergency department (ED) admissions in the state and we have been using predictive analytics to identify at-risk youths in foster care and analyze how physicians are prescribing opioids. Jiva will allow us to improve on our success by applying advanced PHM approaches to youth with high intensity needs, individuals with long-term services and supports (LTSS) needs, and those misusing opioid drugs. Jiva will also allow us to provide better information to mobile crisis teams and identify high-risk and priority individuals within waiver contracts to help us decrease inpatient readmissions, reduce length of stay, and further reduce ED admissions.

“We invested in Jiva to serve as the underlying platform for Alliance Complete Care, a model which employs standard screenings, interventions and multidisciplinary care teams working alongside providers to address the broad range of an individual’s health needs,” said Alliance Executive Vice President–Care Management Dr. Beth Melcher. “Jiva will help us successfully tackle the shift toward value-based care while integrating both behavioral health and physical health services.”

New population health management platform targets better outcomes

After impressive interdepartmental teamwork and close collaboration with the NC Medicaid Division of Health Benefits and other stakeholders, the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Waiver pilot project has now moved into a “go live” stage.

“These are very exciting times for TBI advocacy groups and the TBI community as whole,” said Cristina Phillips, CBIS, TBI Waiver Implementation Team Lead. “With the implementation of the TBI Waiver pilot project comes a broader awareness of the complex needs of this population along with increased services targeted to support this unique population.”

Alliance is in the process of creating a comprehensive TBI Waiver provider network. Currently there are 10 contracted TBI Waiver providers, who meet monthly during TBI Waiver provider collaboratives.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with the Brain Injury Association of NC, which is providing comprehensive clinical training at each one of our TBI Waiver provider collaboratives,” Phillips said.

As part of the Alliance/BIANC partnership, Alliance is working with our Organizational Development and Learning Department to create a TBI training library, complete with at least nine TBI-specific training modules that will be available to Alliance staff and providers within our network. These trainings will be free and accessible online through Recovery University. To obtain free access codes to these specific BIANC training modules, e-mail Cristina Phillips at cphillips@alliancebhc.org.

As we move towards Medicaid reform and tailored plans, projects like the TBI Waiver are helping Alliance to incorporate allied health professionals into our comprehensive provider network. Alliance is currently seeking to add allied health professionals to our TBI Waiver network, which was opened from October 23 to November 23, 2018, to accept applications for PT/OT and speech and language therapists as well as specialized consultative service practitioners. In addition, discussions have begun with local hospitals around engaging hospital home health care and outpatient clinics as TBI Waiver allied health providers.

There are currently 54 people on Alliance’s TBI Waiver registry of interest, with six people being referred for level of care review at press time. Alliance’s TBI Waiver guides are initiating outreach with members on the registry of interest to assist them in preparing for the TBI Waiver eligibility review process. The many steps of this process include diagnostic confirmation and Medicaid eligibility review. Alliance’s TBI guide teams are working hard to complete outreach with all individuals on the TBI Waiver registry of interest.

The goal is to serve 49 individuals the first year of the waiver, 99 in the second year and 107 in the third year of the pilot project. The state is holding its first TBI Waiver stakeholder committee meeting in early December with the hope of statewide replication sometime after the third year of the TBI Waiver pilot project.
Alliance Clinical Pharmacist Vera Reinstein wins award

Alliance Clinical Pharmacist Vera Farkas Reinstein, PharmD, recently received the Cardinal Health Generation Rx Champions Award for excellence in community-based prescription drug abuse prevention.

This award, which was presented at the North Carolina Association of Pharmacists annual convention in September, honors a pharmacist who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to raising awareness of the dangers of prescription drug abuse among the general public and among the pharmacy community. It is also intended to encourage educational prevention efforts aimed at patients, youth, and other members of the community.

Dr. Reinstein’s role at Alliance includes provider outreach and education, as well as community collaboration on projects around drug overdose and naloxone access. She goes above and beyond in helping NCAP, pharmacists, and North Carolina communities with the opioid epidemic. Dr. Reinstein has volunteered with NCAP to produce two webinars related to naloxone and chronic pain management and is one of several key pharmacists who has helped develop the “NCAP Advanced Opioid Workshop—Transforming Practice to Save Lives,” which was offered for the first time at the NCAP convention.

During the past year, Dr. Reinstein has been instrumental in helping with efforts to reduce the risk of injection-related infections by making connections for syringe exchange programs with community pharmacies willing to sell syringes. She also recognized a need for an up-to-date drug disposal guide and authored an infographic to be placed on the NC Board of Pharmacy website for public access and to help pharmacists with patient education.

The Cardinal Health Foundation (not affiliated with Cardinal Innovations Healthcare) supports local, national and international programs that improve health care quality and build healthy communities. The Cardinal Health Foundation also offers grants to encourage employee service to the community and works through international agencies to donate much-needed medical supplies and funding to those who need them in times of disaster. To learn more, visit cardinalhealth.com/community.

The Alliance for Patient Medication Safety (APMS) was established by the National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA) and is listed as a Patient Safety Organization with the Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ). The mission of APMS is to foster a culture of quality within the profession of pharmacy that promotes a continuous systems analysis to develop best practices that will reduce medication errors, improve medication use and enhance patient care. To learn more, visit medicationsafety.org.
TCLI success story
Program participant recounts positive life changes

Alliance Post-transition Engagement Specialist Nathania Headley works with individuals who have transitioned successfully into the community with a Transition to Community Living Initiative (TCLI) housing slot. Monthly well checks are provided to ensure individuals are receiving services and community supports to maintain wellness in the community of their choice.

Headley provides us with this first-person success story from one of the individuals we have served:

“I was living on the street, spent time in jail and was hopeless. I want to express my gratitude to Alliance Behavioral Healthcare for giving me an opportunity to choose where I wanted to live, which is now fully furnished, stocked with groceries and located in a peaceful neighborhood. I am overwhelmed by the change this has made in my life. I have been in a TCLI housing slot for at least 15 months and I have obtained my own transportation.

“Since I have been afforded this opportunity to live in my own housing, I am:

• Determined to reach my goals and maintain my independence.
• Taking college courses online and am on the A-B honor roll.
• Working a part-time job to make ends meet and in the future I plan to operate a transitional home.
• Surrounded by a supportive family.
• In a supportive relationship.
• Pursuing a peer support certification.
• Maintaining a stable recovery so I can pursue my passion, which is to help and encourage others to stay on their recovery journey.

“Lesson learned: During my imprisonment I read several books that shaped my belief that if you apply yourself, good things will happen. I also had to come to grips with accepting who I am so it could no longer consume me but bring me success. My greatest teaching moments were not on the mountain top but when I hit rock bottom. Having a mentor gave me the courage to rise again.

“Again, I am so grateful for the awesome help I am receiving from Alliance and my provider. One day, I will be the ‘face of Alliance.’ I will be able to tell my story and say ‘Look at me! I made it because of the resources, supports and determination.’"
Partnerships aim to prevent misuse of medications

Alliance has donated 1,000 medication disposal pouches to the Wake County Sheriff’s Office, and has also partnered with the Garner Police Department to distribute the pouches. The pouches allow individuals to safely dispose of expired or unneeded medications—especially opioid pain medications and other narcotics—at home to prevent misuse, abuse and addiction.

The donation is part of Alliance’s initiative to share part of its supply of 30,000 disposal pouches with community partners working to fight the opioid epidemic. The packets are also being distributed to high-risk individuals by Alliance Care Coordinators, and the Alliance Community Relations Department is sharing them as part of its outreach activities.

Wake County Sheriff Donnie Harrison said that the department plans to have a pouch in every car so that deputies may offer them to seniors in their wellness check program or when they encounter people with unneeded medications. “The deputies go into a lot of houses and when they see prescription meds they can start a conversation about whether the medications are being used and help people dispose of them,” Harrison said.

Research indicates that only one in child in 20 who misuses prescription medications gets them from a stranger, a drug dealer or the internet. Instead, two thirds of all people who misuse prescription medications get them from friends and family. These statistics underscore the importance of securing medications at home and properly disposing of leftover medications to prevent them from being misused.

The drug disposal pouch distribution is part of Alliance’s broad-based and comprehensive efforts approaching the opioid epidemic from multiple directions, including our Alliance For Action On Opioids website (AllianceForAction.org). The website provides information about keeping prescription drugs from being misused, recognizing the red flags of opioid misuse, and preventing overdose deaths with naloxone, a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose.

Alliance is also working to increase access to treatment, reduce unmet treatment need, and reduce opioid-related overdose deaths. “We’ve done a lot to expand access and have added new providers of evidence-based medication-assisted treatment,” said Carlyle Johnson, Director of Provider Network Strategy at Alliance. “We are also trying to help remove barriers that keep people from treatment by addressing the social determinants of health – environmental factors that present barriers to people engaging and remaining in treatment and recovery, including housing, transportation, food security and education.”

For the fourth year, Alliance’s Office of Legal Affairs is sponsoring a Toys For Tots collection drive. The mission of the Marine Toys for Tots Program is to collect new unwrapped toys and distribute those toys to economically disadvantaged children at during the holiday season.
Employee engagement campaign wins awards

The Alliance “Powered By People” campaign, designed to celebrate, motivate and engage staff around our goals, has garnered several “Wallie” and “Golden Tusk” awards from the Carolinas Healthcare Public Relations and Marketing Society (CHPRMS).

The campaign won “Wallie” awards, which recognize individual and one-time collateral pieces for photography, posters and the “What Powers Us?” brand book (flipgorilla.com/p/25441453291342237/show).

The entire campaign won a “Golden Tusk” award, which recognizes multimedia campaigns.

Alliance, Raleigh PD team up to offer free Mental Health First Aid training

Alliance is partnering with the Raleigh Police Department to offer free Mental Health First Aid classes. These eight-hour sessions will be held once each month from December 2018 to May 2019. All sessions will be held at the Raleigh Police Department Southwest District, 601 Hutton St., Raleigh. The Mental Health First Aid class will provide insight and skills to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and addiction. To sign up, visit: raleighnc.gov/home/news/content/CorNews/Articles.

Mental Health First Aid classes are also available at Alliance community offices across our service area. More information and registration is available at Recovery University: alliancebh.academy.reliaslearning.com/alliance-courses.aspx.
the fewest options. And I firmly believe that if we had not been there doing what we were doing, we would have had all those people walk out with a tent, which is what happened after Matthew.”

Gardner said that in our ongoing work, Alliance staffers have connected people with vocational rehabilitation services, Work First programs and Service Source, which provides vocational training and employment programs for adults with disabilities.

“We’ve provided numerous household packages to include bedding, hygiene products, cleaning products, pots, and food boxes,” she said. Community Education Specialist Laressa Witt also assisted a member with completion of a resume and job interview preparation.

Just as we did after Hurricane Matthew, Alliance is also participating in the Hope4NC FEMA Crisis Counseling Program, this time in partnership with the Cumberland Disaster Recovery Coalition. “We’ll have 13 teams going door-to-door throughout Cumberland to provide emotional support for those affected,” Witt said. “We also have a child specialist to address the needs of children and adolescents, and two community resource liaisons to help with disaster resources.”

Cumberland County survivors of Hurricane Florence can get free individual or family crisis outreach through Hope4NC by calling 1-855-587-3463. In addition, we have provided counseling services at the disaster recovery centers, which are designed to help survivors find resources all in one place, with representatives of FEMA, HUD, DHHS, Alliance and others available to support survivors, Witt said.

These initiatives and partnerships represent a continuation of lessons learned from the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Oshel said. “People had gone through this really regulatory, bureaucratic, stressful process with FEMA to literally rebuild their lives and get some sense of normalcy, and we discovered then how transformative it could be for someone to just come along and say ‘So how are you doing, what do you have, what do you need, and how can we help?’” Oshel said.

“And so now two years later, here we find ourselves again, much smarter this time around.” Oshel said.

“The other thing we didn’t fully appreciate before the process of Matthew was just how long recovery can take,” Oshel said “When I think ahead about what we are going to try to do this time and knowing now what we didn’t know then, I realize how important it is that Alliance stay visible to people who are still just trying to keep their head above water, who just don’t even know what they need and how much this has affected them. It is really important to be in the shelters immediately following a disaster, but to be there six months from the storm, nine months from the storm and on the anniversary of the storm is even more important.”
Alliance CARES to focus on homelessness

This quarter the Alliance CARES initiative is focusing staff awareness on people experiencing homelessness. The 2017 Point-In-Time Count of people experiencing homelessness found that almost 554,000 people in the United States were considered homeless, with the largest increase in unaccompanied children and young adults. Over 34 percent were living in places not meant for human habitation, meaning they were living in the streets, tents and abandoned buildings. Almost 9,000 people in North Carolina were considered homeless in 2017. In the four counties we serve, 1,716 people, or almost 20 percent of the state total, were considered homeless.

“Alliance has always been a state leader on housing and healthcare and we are very proud of the commitment we make to end and prevent homelessness,” said Alliance Executive Vice President–Community Relations Ann Oshel. “The impact of homelessness on a person’s mental health is extraordinary and tragic. And we can do something about it.”

Upcoming activities for Alliance staff will include a panel presentation on understanding the nature of homelessness, accessing the homeless service system and engaging people who are homeless in treatment; volunteer activities in each of our counties; and a winter wear collection drive to benefit people experiencing homelessness. The winter months are extremely difficult for people living outside–on the coldest nights shelters will fly white flags signifying no one is turned away and yet some will still freeze to death or suffer frostbite because they are outside.

To date, Alliance staff members have racked up 221.5 community volunteer hours through Alliance CARES, not including in-office activities such as making Valentine’s Day cards, our backpack event, and disaster relief.

See NC PIT Count data and other resources at the NC Coalition to End Homelessness website.

Alliance Resources

The Alliance For Action on Opioids website (AllianceForAction.org) is a resource to help individuals, family members, and professionals take small but important steps in their lives and work to help stem the tide of the opioid epidemic.

Discover Recovery University, the online training gateway that allows users to register for all Alliance trainings (online and in-person), including Mental Health First Aid.

The It’s Time to Re-Think campaign aims to debunk the common myths and misconceptions about people with mental illness, substance use disorders and intellectual/developmental disabilities that create stigma and keep them from getting the help they need.

Alliance InTouch is a newsletter for the employees and community of Alliance Behavioral Healthcare. Please send comments and suggestions about this publication and its contents to Lisa Brockmeier: lbrockmeier@alliancebhc.org.

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