

RESULTS OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS FROM A STATEWIDE HIV COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSESSMENT

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Purpose: To gain an understanding of the current level of services for people living with HIV, key informant interviews were conducted throughout the state of Georgia.

Method: The HIV section of the Georgia Department of Human Resources partnered with a local university to complete a HIV Community Services Assessment (CSA). The initial phase of the CSA included face-to-face structured key informant interviews with representatives from public and community based agencies that provided HIV primary care and support services.

Findings: A total of 35 interviews were conducted. Need for primary care and support services varied across urban, suburban, and rural communities. The rural and suburban areas were extremely receptive and appreciated having the opportunity to participate. Issues that agencies identified as impacting their ability to provide quality HIV care and services included: stigma, lack of appropriate substance and mental health facilities, high incidence of crack cocaine use, large geographical regions with limited services, a tiered health care system in the Atlanta Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA), limited access to schools to provide prevention programs, the “down low” phenomenon, controversy surrounding the use of rapid testing, and an inability to access populations for testing that are most at risk for HIV infection.

Discussion: This was the first effort to seek input from every health district in the state regarding HIV services. Many of the issues prevalent at the beginning of the HIV epidemic 20 years ago, are still problematic today. It is clear that findings from this assessment indicate that nurses need to provide comprehensive care and collaborate with social services agencies to maximize health outcomes for people living with HIV