

# North Carolina Formerly Incarcerated Transition (FIT) Program Newsletter

*November 2018*



Tommy Green, Orange County FIT Program, working with a client.

## **Our Mission**

Improve the wellbeing and health of people upon release from incarceration and improve their chances of successful reentry into the community.

## **Our Goals**

Connect people being released from incarceration with needed health services; to include physical health, mental health and substance use disorder treatment. Assist FIT Program clients with all aspects of reentry; to include housing, job training, legal needs, education, transportation and life skills.

## **Intended Outcomes Among FIT Program Clients**

- Improved utilization of primary care medical services, mental health services and substance use disorder treatment
- Reduced hospitalization and emergency room use
- Reduced recidivism and re-arrest
- Increased access to needed reentry services and client satisfaction

## Our Beginnings

Modeled on the programs developed by the Transitions Clinic Network, our national partner, the NC FIT Program has been serving clients since May of 2017. Our first program was launched as a partnership with the Durham County Department of Public Health and Lincoln Community Health Center. The North Carolina Department of Public Health provided seed funding to hire our first Community Health Worker (CHW) through Durham DPH. We received significant support and guidance from the Durham Criminal Justice Resource Center (CJRC) and their reentry council.

In April of 2018 we expanded our work to Orange County, supported by funding from the Duke Endowment. In Orange County our CHW is hired by the Orange County Health Department and our clinical partner is the Chapel Hill Clinic of Piedmont Health Services. Recently in Orange County, Caitlin Fenhagen of the Orange County Criminal Justice Resource Department has obtained funding from DPS to start an Orange County Reentry Council, which will be an important resource for the FIT program as we move forward.

## Addressing Critical Public Health

**Opioid Epidemic** A recent study published by UNC researchers shows that people released from the NC Prison system have 40 times greater risk of death from opioid overdose in the first 2 weeks after release compared to the general population. The risk of death from heroin overdose is 74 times that of the general population. We are working to ensure that we screen all our FIT Program clients for substance use disorder and will help them in obtaining medication-assisted treatment if indicated.

**Community Mental Health** In partnership with Dr. Bill Price, a Durham community Psychiatrist, the FIT program cares for clients with mental illness that have barriers to care within the mental health system. Dr. Price sees FIT clients at no charge and we are deeply grateful for his service.

## Next Steps

Working in partnership with the NC Department of Public Safety we contracted to expand to 2 additional counties, Wake and Mecklenburg, and to hire 5 new CHWs to provide services across those two counties.

**Wake County** In Wake County we are working closely with two clinical partners: UNC at WakeBrook and Advance Community Health Center. At WakeBrook, we are specializing in addressing the needs of people coming out of incarceration with Serious Mental Illness (SMI). Our clients in Wake County that do not suffer from SMI will have their medical home with Advance Community Health Center.

**Mecklenburg County** Mecklenburg County, we are very pleased to be working with the Center for Community Transitions (CCT) as our lead partner, as well as with the Charlotte Community Health Clinic, which will serve as the medical home for FIT clients in that county.

**Governor's Reentry Council** The FIT Program was asked to present a proposal to the Health Subcommittee of the Governor's Reentry Council. The proposal will be included in the final report to the Governor at the end of 2018.

## FIT Program featured on WUNC

# FIT Program Provides Critical Medical Support For Former Inmates

By DANA TERRY & FRANK STASIO • JUN 13, 2018

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Jessica Romine (right) was recently released from jail and is receiving assistance through a partnership with Tommy Green (left) that was established by the North Carolina

While incarcerated it is a constitutional right for inmates to receive medical care. But what happens when inmates are released and no longer have access to health services? The reality is they often go without medication or treatment. Considering prisons have become the largest mental healthcare providers in America, it is in the interest of public

## Statewide Convening of FIT Programs with our partners from the Transitions Clinic Network November 5th and 6th

Dr. Shira Shavit, TCN Director, Anna Steiner, TCN Program Manager and Joe Calderon, TCN lead Community Health Worker, will be joining us for a 2 day gathering of the 4 NC FIT Programs. We will be hearing from our community partners, sharing best practices, and planning for the future of the FIT Program in NC.

## How you can help?

- The NC FIT Program is the only program of its kind in a state without expansion of Medicaid.
- The majority of our clients are uninsured and face numerous barriers to obtaining even basic medical services.
- Copays for primary care visits and medications, even at a community health center, are often unaffordable.
- The NC FIT Program provides vouchers for our clients to receive primary care services and to cover costs for their medications.
- We rely entirely on private donations to pay for these services and medications.
- We need donations to continue providing vouchers across our programs and hopefully to begin to cover dental costs as well.

### Make a gift

Please consider making a donation by going to [go.unc.edu/giveFIT](https://go.unc.edu/giveFIT) and know that 100% of that money will go toward medical services and medications.