

FOR RELEASE NOV. 30, 2005
Contact: Beth Stringfield
Beth.Stringfield@PiedmontConsortium.org
(919) 682-3998 x223



HEPATITIS C / HIV PROGRAM LOOKS TO FUTURE COMMUNITY NEEDS

A three-year project to address Hepatitis C and HIV in the Durham area has established programs that will continue to help people at risk, says Beth Stringfield, director of the Piedmont HIV Health Care Consortium. She spoke today to a meeting of partner organizations to present the results of the program and announce future plans.

“We now have testing programs, support groups and community medical training in place,” Stringfield said. “The public service campaign on Hep C testing has raised awareness. People have access to resources through our website. It’s now time to build on that foundation to insure that these important services continue.”

PHICAS was established under a federal grant designed to coordinate health care services for the uninsured and underinsured. PHICAS partner agencies created a network to provide access to services in Durham, Franklin, Granville, Person, Vance and Warren Counties. As part of the project, a major public awareness campaign was launched in October to encourage people to get tested for Hep C.

“The measure of our success is here today,” Stringfield told the group. “Doctors, health professionals, social workers, educators – all have worked together to make sure that the most important people – our patients – receive the information and the care they need.”

PHICAS developed a managed information system to enable care providers to communicate and eliminate inefficiencies, Stringfield said. “This reduced the administrative burden on agencies and improved the continuity of care.” The program funded free Hep C screening at the Durham County Health Department and offered clinical education programs for medical providers.

One of the challenges the project faced was lack of information, Stringfield said. “Hep C is under-diagnosed, and it is not required to be reported to public health officials. One of our goals was to get a clearer idea of how many people in our target area are impacted, by raising awareness and encouraging testing.”

The culmination of the program will be a statewide symposium on Hepatitis C and HIV, scheduled for March 30 and 31 in Durham. It is sponsored by PHICAS, North Carolina Department of Health & Human Services HIV/STD Prevention and Care Branch HCV Program, and Wake Forest University.

Also on the horizon is a comprehensive needs assessment, using the resources developed over the last three years, a second phase of the public service media campaign, and a resource directory.