

## RAI Symposium Presentation Report

Good morning. My name is Jasmine Canady and I serve as the Craven County Opioid Epidemic Response Outreach Coordinator as well as the Co-Chair of the transportation task force alongside Katelyn Godley, Opioid Program Manager of the Craven County Opioid Epidemic Response.

### 1. What was your subgroup area of focus from the Task Force?

- Access to transportation contributes to the economic development, health, and quality of life for individuals in recovery. Convenient, reliable, and frequent transportation is needed to access healthcare and social services, consumer services, employment, and educational opportunities.
- With every tier in the state represented on the task force, we recognized the need for transportation to treatment and recovery support services including counseling, detox, employment, education, judicial matters, and harm reduction services.

### 2. What became the main objectives of your subgroup focus?

With equity, availability, and sustainability as the guiding principles, the main objectives of the transportation task force include:

- i. Exploring and identifying program models to improve access to transportation.
- ii. Identifying barriers to program success
- iii. Raising awareness of statewide transportation services and resources.

### 3. What other ideas emerged from your subgroup that did not work and/or you have not tried yet?

- Early on in our mission, we recognized a few challenges linked to the disconnect with citizens in rural counties due to the lack of internet access and social media.
- While rural areas with smaller populations struggle with limited availability and access, the task force attempted to explore transportation voucher program opportunities in partnership with third-party private transportation providers.

### 4. What has your subgroup accomplished to date?

- Members of the transportation task force have reported implementation of 4 transportation program models: depending on community needs, characteristics, and resources. Implemented program models include Public Transportation, Voucher and Volunteer Programs, Connector Services, and Coordinated Services.
- Just to highlight a few: **Pitt County Detention Center** has implemented a Rideshare program utilizing COSSAP grant funds to provide roundtrip services to participants of their SHARP program post-release to treatment, health care services, and employment utilizing third-party providers such as Uber and Lyft.

- **District 9 Drug Court in Lenoir County** which also serves **Wayne and Greene County** has shared that rides are provided for program participants to drug court utilizing probation officers and peer support specialists. Greene County reports that its public transit system has been awarded 4 federal grants for over 4 million dollars to purchase transit tickets. They also report the utilization of other resources such as Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities formerly known as Vocational Rehab, to assist with transport.
  - The **Craven Area Rural Transportation System** better known as CARTS, has implemented its Recovery transportation program utilizing EDTAP grant funds to provide rides for Craven, Pamlico, and Jones County residents currently enrolled in treatment and recovery housing programs. They have expanded this program by **implementing a coordinating services program** with the Craven-Pamlico Reentry Council to improve the efficiency, availability, and effectiveness of transportation services for justice-involved individuals with substance use and mental health disorders. During fiscal year 2023-2024, CARTS provided over 1,900 trips and assisted approximately 45 unduplicated individuals through this project.
  - Last month, the CARTS Recovery Transportation program was selected as one of the winners of the 2024 Civic Excellence in Innovation Awards by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners for its collaborative efforts to address transportation needs.
  - Additionally, the Craven County Opioid Epidemic Response has contracted with ICGH to assist with funding a Care Navigator position utilizing Opioid Settlement funds to facilitate connection with and transportation to and from recovery support services.
- 5. What impact do you hope to have as a result of your Task Force subgroup work?**
- While we have accomplished several milestones, we realize there are plenty more to accomplish. As we continue to improve access to transportation, we hope to inspire task force members to reach as far and wide as possible to make a needed connection. We hope that they realize the power they have in their position regardless of their position and the role they serve within their communities.
  - We hope to encourage cultural competence, humility, equity, and empathy among the task force for individuals with substance use disorder, in treatment and recovery, and justice-involved individuals.
- 6. What are the next steps planned for your subgroup's work in this area?**
- Looking ahead at our next steps, we look forward to undertaking the following actions to reach our transportation goals:
    - i. We will continue to expand available programs and resources for transit.

- ii. Secondly, we will continue to share transportation information regarding program models and funding resources.
  - iii. We will work toward increasing the speed and reliability of transportation services.
  - iv. We will continue to encourage exploring partnerships with counties and municipalities to coordinate opioid settlement funding utilization for transportation services.
  - v. We will continue assisting each other with implementing information publication strategies to raise awareness of current transportation services.
  - vi. Lastly, we will continue to advocate for the reduction of stigma for substance use and mental health disorders.
- On behalf of the transportation task force, it has been an amazing journey thus far, meeting, collaborating, and inspiring our task force members to make an impact on the communities they serve, and beyond. We look forward to expanding and welcoming community champions onboard to join us on our mission to effectively increase access to transportation for individuals in treatment and recovery. That concludes our report, thank you!