



Improving Access to HIV Screening to Underserved Populations by Use of an Effective Outreach Team

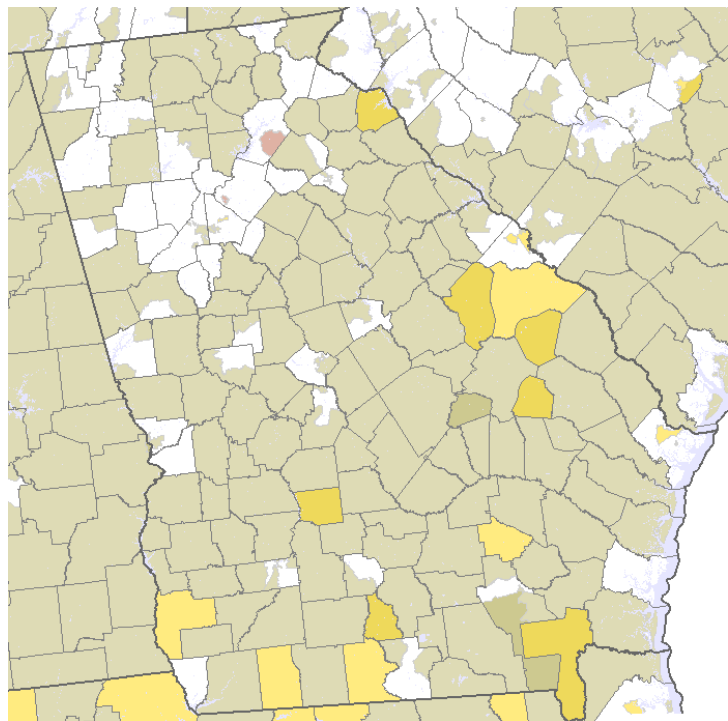
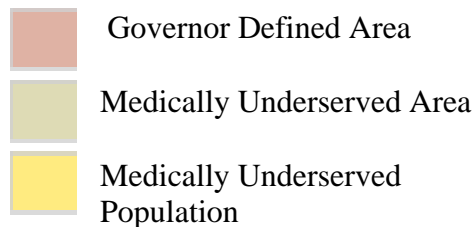
L. Howell, S. Mohan, MD, D. Ivins, T. Wilson, J. Thompson, K. Childs, T. Walker
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Introduction

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were 56,300 new cases of HIV reported in 2006 and they estimate that there are approximately 56,300 new cases each year. According to the same agency, 1 in 4 people infected with HIV are unaware of their diagnosis, thus becoming a potential source for further spread of the disease.

Our program has incorporated free rapid HIV testing in the community through an outreach program, targeting people who wish to be tested but have difficulty with access to medical care (**Figure 1**). Through the use of the outreach team, we are able to target several population groups, including those who were not previously considered “high risk.”

Figure 1. Medically Underserved Counties in Georgia (2008)



Data Source: Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS
Map created by RUPRI Community Information Resource Center
Interactive Map Room:
<http://circ.rupri.org>

Activities

Testing is done through the work of an outreach team which offers free rapid oral testing (OraQuick Advance) in a variety of locations in the region and through participation/availability at various community events and centers. The outreach team consists of 4 members and a rotation schedule. The team has also developed a web site that the public can access for information as well as to locate a nearby testing center.

Our ability to then link the people with positive results to our Ryan White clinic for continued care has also played a singular role in the development of the clinic and the success of our program. People, who are linked to care via our outreach “concierge” service, are able to access our clinic resources for education and drug assistance as well as other community based resources through our collaboration with the local health department.



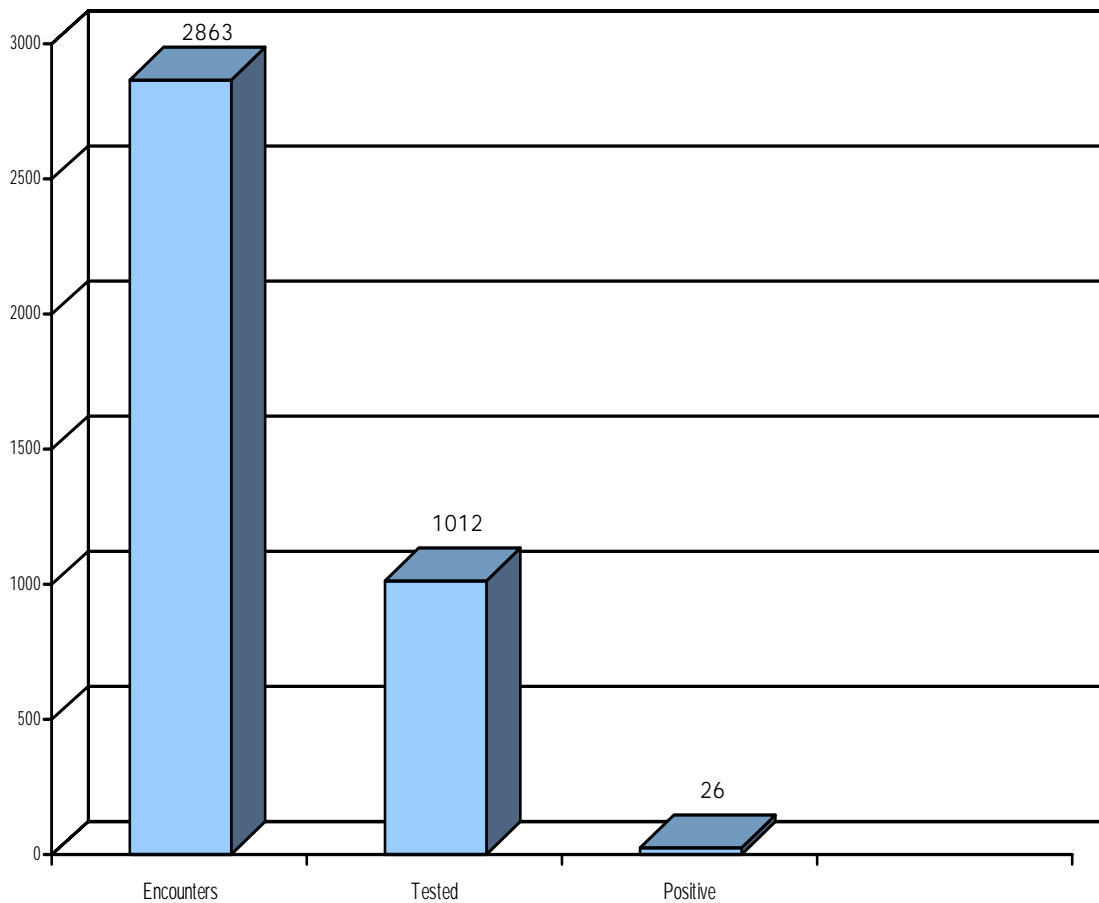
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Results

For the year 2007 (January to December), the Outreach Team spoke with 2,863 people through our community education and testing program. These encounters resulted in testing 1,012 people. Of those tested, 26 were confirmed HIV positive. In percentage terms, the team tested 35% of those they spoke to and, of those tested, 2.5% were HIV positive. **Figure 2** illustrates encounters, tests, and positive results. **Figures 3 and 4** indicate the distribution of the persons tested by area and zip code. As depicted, the area with the highest concentration is regional but the distribution is widespread, since we are able to make the availability of testing known through area resources and the internet.

Figure 2. Encounters, Tests, and Positive Results by the Outreach Team in 2007



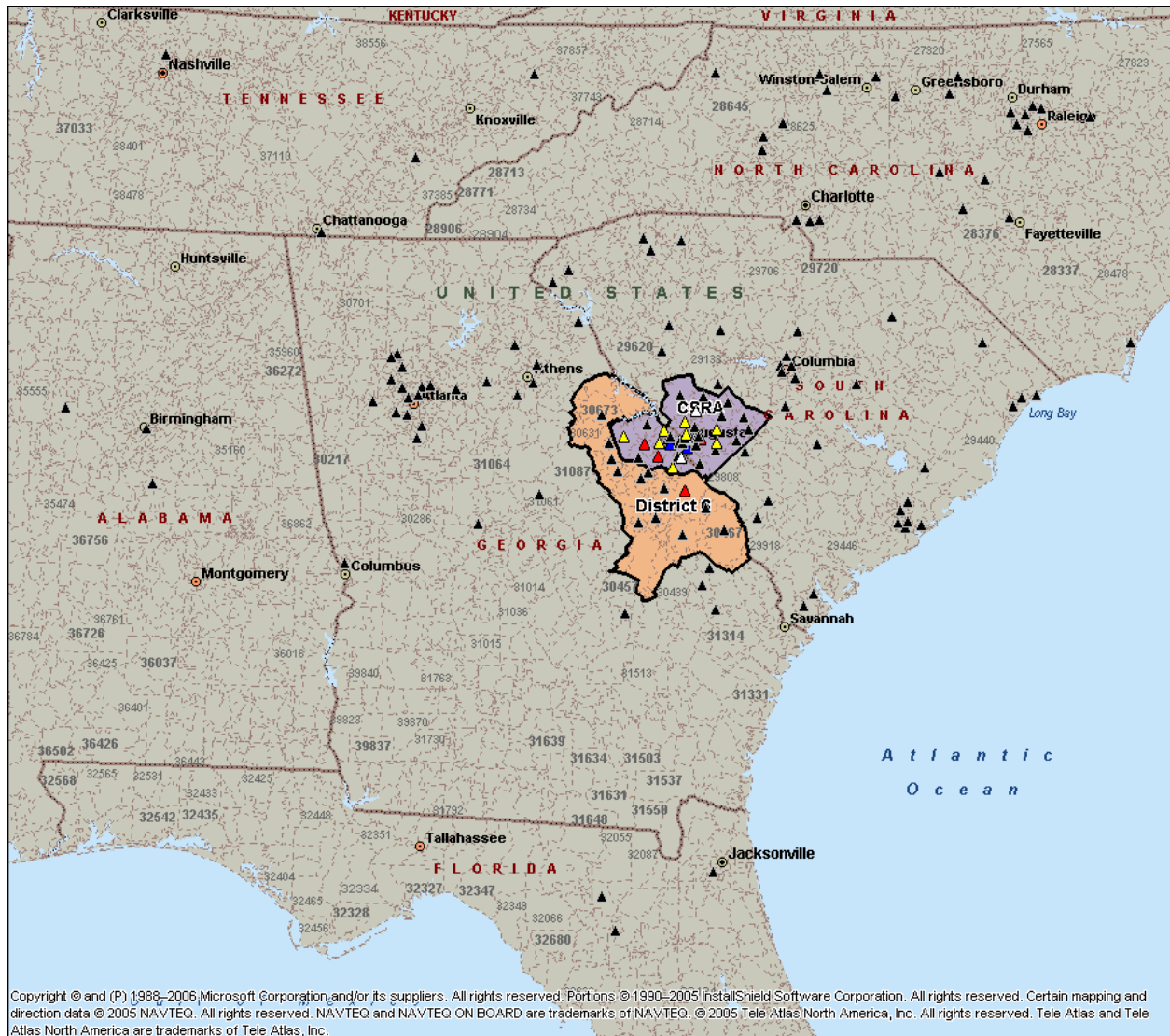


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2007 Clients Tested by Home Zip Code

Figure 3. General Distribution of Persons Tested by the Outreach Team in 2007



- | | |
|--------------|--|
| ▲ 100 to 500 | ■ Central Savannah River Area |
| △ 51 to 99 | ■ Georgia DHR East Central Health District |
| ▲ 11 to 50 | |
| ▲ 6 to 10 | |
| ▲ 1 to 5 | |



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Lessons Learned

Though, as most programs, we have limited resources from which to draw and provide all of our services, through the use of the outreach team and rapid oral HIV testing, we are able to provide free testing for a large number of people who may otherwise not be tested due to lack of access to testing and regular medical care. This translated directly into a higher awareness about HIV in the general population and early linkage to care, which is vital for future control of this disease.

By also offering testing in more non-traditional settings like churches and community events, we are able to reach certain population groups which are not classically considered “high risk”. By having a trained team of outreach workers performing testing, education, and linkage to care, we are having a significant impact in the general perception of HIV as well as the willingness of people to be tested in order to have early diagnosis and access to care.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to our host sites for providing testing space and access to their clientele.

Georgia Host sites: Club Argos, Metropolitan Community Church of Our Redeemer; Parliament Resort, Pyramid Music, Salvation Army/St. Vincent DePaul’s (Women & Homeless) Clinics; The Support Center.

Host Sites South Carolina: The Aiken Center.

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