In August 2017, the STAR Program was awarded $550,000 over 5 years from the NYS Department of Health AIDS Institute’s Corrections to Community Care Continuum. The project, directed by Jessica Yager, MD, MPH, provides comprehensive care to previously incarcerated HIV+ individuals coming home to Brooklyn. This grant is the first step in the development of Back to Brooklyn, a model of care to provide immediate access to comprehensive medical care, behavioral health care and support services to the previously incarcerated. Through Dr. Yager’s efforts, the STAR Health Center has joined the Transitions Clinic Network (TCN), a network of 25 clinics throughout the US and Puerto Rico, all of which provide transitional and primary care as well as intensive case management for individuals with chronic diseases recently released from prison. Key elements central to the TCN clinic model include: 1) easy access to comprehensive primary care; 2) respectful, timely, and culturally competent care; 3) integration of case management and support from trained community health workers who were previously incarcerated themselves; and 4) close partnerships with correctional facilities, local reentry organizations and the community to provide needed social support services and to address social determinants of health. The AIDS Institute funded program allowed STAR to hire Lamont Bryant, BS, MPS, a Community Linkage Specialist, who facilitates linkage, navigation and maintenance in care for reentrants returning to Brooklyn. Mr. Bryant is instrumental in connecting clients to needed services, including housing, benefits, and insurance. Beyond enrolling them in services, he escorts clients to appointments related to both their health and their successful re-entry, including parole, housing, identification card, and medical appointments. He has also integrated the program successfully with other key STAR programs and services, including harm reduction, medical case management, and vocational services. Mr. Bryant is an active member of the STAR Trauma Informed Care Working Group. To date, the program has enrolled eight clients. Dr. Yager and Mr. Bryant attended the TCN’s annual conference in Oakland, CA in May. The focus of the conference was the impact of the opioid epidemic as it affects justice-involved individuals and those returning home post incarceration.
Spring/Summer 2018

Documentary Film on Black Gay Men: On April 13, 2018, the STAR Program and Depressed Black Gay Men (DBGM) presented a special screening of “You Are Not Alone,” a documentary about depression and gay Black men written and directed by NAACP Image Award-winner Stanley Bennett Clay. In the film, Black gay men share stories of their struggle and suffering with depression. The resounding message in the documentary is that a Black gay man who feels as though he has no place in the world has value and purpose, and that all he needs to do is to reject the denials of who he is, accept himself, and realize and achieve his potential in life. It celebrates the lives of Black gay men and shows that there is life after depression.

Parenting Class Graduation: On May 11, 2018, four STAR Health Center patients graduated from STAR’s first 12-week parenting program. Based on the “Parenting Journey” curriculum developed by family systems therapists and counselors, the program promotes attitudes that enhance good parenting (e.g., respect, helping others, listening with empathy, being curious). It emphasizes the parent as a person rather than on the child or the child in a disciplinary relationship with the parent. Rosa Benitez, BSW, STAR Program medical case manager, conducted the program, which will be offered twice per year.

BATES Conference: The STAR Program’s Adolescent Education Program (AEP)/Teens Helping Each Other (THEO) held its annual Brooklyn Association of Teen Educators (BATES) conference on May 19, 2018 at SUNY Downstate. Over 150 youth and providers attended throughout the day. Eight organizations participated in the Entertainment and Theater Festival and 24 organizations tabled at the event. The keynote speaker was Wade Davis, LGBTQ activist and former National Football League (NFL) player. Davis is a thought leader, advocate, writer, public speaker, and educator on gender, race, and orientation equality. He is also the director of professional sports outreach at the You Can Play Project, an organization dedicated to ending discrimination, sexism, and homophobia in sports. Davis played for the Tennessee Titans, the Washington Redskins, and the Seattle Seahawks, as well as for two NFL teams in Europe. In 2014, Davis began consulting for the NFL to ensure that LGBTQ athletes have a safe and affirming space. At the You Can Play Project, Davis works to develop curriculum, programming, training, and conversations that are focused on inclusion and diversity. Davis was an adjunct professor at NYU and Rutgers University, and has lectured on the intersections of race, sexuality, gender, and sports. He is the former assistant director of academic enrichment and work readiness at The Hetrick-Martin Institute, where he taught LGBT youth how to define success.

Spectrum Scores: The STAR Health Center was recently listed as a partner organization on Spectrum Scores, a site that helps the LGBTQ+ community to locate competent health care and to make healthcare more accessible and inclusive. The site was founded by three medical students that wanted to connect patients to LGBTQ friendly providers.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS


COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: HCC, Inc.  

Amanetou Bah received the STAR Employee Recognition Award in February 2018. Ms. Bah has been with STAR for nearly 20 years and is recognized for her outstanding service in the Family Focused Health Care Program (FFHCP), where she works as part of its multidisciplinary team providing comprehensive care to pregnant women and families. She is responsible for FFHCP and hepatitis C program data entry and quality assurance and serves as a translator for French speaking patients. Ms. Bah is very committed to her work, and has been noted by colleagues to go the extra mile and be very passionate about care for the patients and a resource to her peers. Ms. Bah earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Community Health Education from York College of CUNY in 2011.

Verneal Cooper received the STAR Employee Recognition Award in April 2018. Ms. Cooper has been with STAR for 14 years and has consistently displayed excellent customer service to STAR Health Center clients. She is calm under stressful circumstances and maintains a professional demeanor. She displays a strong sense of teamwork and lends a helping hand when she can to whoever needs it.

Gracie Han, MD, MS, joined the STAR Program in 2017 as a data manager and statistician. Dr. Han is responsible for the data quality control, quality improvement and statistical analyses of the ongoing scientific projects. Prior to joining STAR, Dr. Han had 15 years of experience working as faculty and senior staff in university hospital settings with clinicians and clinical researchers on data interpretation and reporting.

Rebecca Kavanagh, PharmD, BCACP, AAHIVP joined the STAR Program in August 2017 as an HIV Clinical Pharmacist. She is also an Assistant Professor at Touro College of Pharmacy. Dr. Kavanagh received her Doctorate of Pharmacy from SUNY at Buffalo School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. She completed residencies at The Brooklyn Hospital Center and Long Island University, specializing in ambulatory care. She earned her Board of Pharmacy Specialties Certification in Ambulatory Care, and is credentialed by the American Academy of HIV Medicine as an HIV Pharmacist. She is passionate about caring for underserved and underrepresented patient populations in NYC. She precepts first year pharmacy residents from SUNY Downstate and pharmacy students from Touro College of Pharmacy, and enjoys providing continuing education to the medical providers in the STAR Program.

Jean Richard, BSW, Community Health Worker in STAR’s Supportive Counseling Program, received a Bachelor in Science in Social Work from York College of CUNY.

Elizabeth K. Smith joined the STAR Program in January 2018 as a Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) Prevention Specialist in the Adolescent Education Program. In that role, she teaches sexual health education and assists in outreach in low socioeconomic neighborhoods. Previously, Ms. Smith studied sociology and worked with pregnant and parenting teens in Atlanta, GA. Presently she is pursuing an associate’s degree in community health.

Tracey Walker joined the STAR Program in January 2018 as a Research Support Specialist in the Family Focused Health Care Program (FFHCP). In that role, she assists case managers with resolving patient issues. Prior to joining STAR, she was a peer advocate/outreach specialist at Community Health Care Network.

Founded in 1982, the Haitian-American Community Coalition (HCC) (HCCInc.org) is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit community-based service provider (and originally a network coordinator of 8 Haitian community centers in the New York metropolitan region). While its mission is to serve Caribbean- and African-Americans, it welcomes all community members. HCC offers health education, adult literacy, supportive housing, supportive services, and a wellness center, including a PrEP navigation program. Housing placement assistance is available for eligible persons living with HIV/AIDS. Services within HCC’s housing program include case management, recreational counseling, tutoring, nutrition education, mental health services, psychiatric evaluation and visits, substance abuse counseling, supportive groups, and nursing. A collaboration with Global Trauma Research, Inc. (GTR) was formed to create the Brooklyn Empowerment Wellness (BeWell) Center, providing general counseling services for people suffering from psychological trauma. The objective of the center is to provide culturally competent trauma informed services (research, counseling, support and education) to underserved minority populations in New York City. Services are available in English, Haitian Creole, and Spanish.

Grantee Award

The STAR Program was awarded $3.3 million over 2.5 years from the Ryan White Part A Care Coordination Program for New York City to provide medical case management and care coordination services for people living with HIV.
Duties and Responsibilities: Overseer and coordinate all day-to-day patient care activities and operations to ensure optimal patient care experience. Work with staff across disciplines to ensure smooth patient flow, including room assignment, timely start and end of sessions, offering appropriate services, and ensuring efficient management of the SHC front desk, supplies, and equipment. Participate in the leadership of the SHC Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program; directly responsible for the identification of QM measures, tracking and development of systems for improvement. Develop, maintain, and execute SHC-specific policies and procedures governing all aspects of service delivery, in coordination with other SHC staff. Required Qualifications: Bachelor’s Degree with at least 5 years’ management experience in an academic medical center with integrated care/research. Experience with EMR and Microsoft Office Applications. Cultural competence required. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Preferred qualifications include bilingual English/Haitian Creole or English/Spanish. Salary Range: $51,366.00-$108,023.00. (Represents Location for F/T appointees. Hours of Work: 9:00AM to 5:00 PM. Days of Work: M-F including some evenings. 37.5 hours/week). Submit a resume to Alecia Charles, MPH at alecia.charles@downstate.edu.

Care Coordinator

Duties and Responsibilities: Provide direct supervision to 4-5 Care Coordinators. Serve as a team leader to coordinate and manage the smooth operation of the Care Coordination Project. Develop, implement and monitor treatment plans for individuals with active complications and undiagnosed or ‘at-risk’ patients. Ensure quality improvement of work processes and procedures in compliance with all guidelines and policies. Ensure compliance with institutional policies and procedures. Serve as SHC representative on internal and external committees. Oversee the implementation of the care coordination plans. Provide support to the SHC Front Desk. Participate in the development of educational materials. Participate in ongoing quality improvement. Document all patient activities on required data forms for submission into eSHARE or an alternative data system. Required Qualifications: AA, AAS degree or equivalent educational credits with at least 3 years of experience working in an agency providing case management, social services, or health care services. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Personal experience with HIV, HCV and/or substance use. Preferred Qualifications: 4-year college degree may be substituted for one year of experience. Experience working with HIV+, substance use disorders, and/or mental illness preferred. Experience working with antiretroviral (ARV) clients. Experience working in multidisciplinary and multicultural team setting. Bilingual in English/Spanish or English/Haitian Creole an asset. Experience using electronic health record. Experience working with LGBTQ populations. Experience with preparing educational materials for social media. Salary Range: $37,000-$65,000. Hours of work: Full-time, Monday – Friday, 9:00am - 5:00pm, 37.5 hours per week. Participate in required data collections. Document all patient activities on required data forms for submission into eSHARE or an alternative data system. Participate in interdisciplinary comprehensive treatment plan development and implementation. Participate in interdisciplinary comprehensive treatment plan development and implementation. Required Qualifications: Bachelor’s Degree with at least 5 years’ management experience in an academic medical center with integrated care/research. Experience with EMR and Microsoft Office Applications. Cultural competence required. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Preferred qualifications include bilingual English/Haitian Creole or English/Spanish. Salary Range: $51,366.00-$108,023.00. (Represents Location for F/T appointees. Hours of Work: 9:00AM to 5:00 PM. Days of Work: M-F including some evenings. 37.5 hours/week). Submit a resume to Alecia Charles, MPH at alecia.charles@downstate.edu.

Community Health Worker (Research Support Specialist)

Duties and Responsibilities: Conduct outreach events. Participate in budget development and assistance with grant writing, as needed. Serve as primary liaison with UHB administration to ensure coordination with institutional policies and procedures. Serve as SHC representative on internal and external committees. Promote patient care and promotion of SHC services in the community. Required Qualifications: Bachelor’s Degree with at least 5 years’ management experience in an academic medical center with integrated care/research. Experience with EMR and Microsoft Office Applications. Cultural competence required. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Preferred qualifications include bilingual English/Haitian Creole or English/Spanish. Salary Range: $51,366.00-$108,023.00. (Represents Location for F/T appointees. Hours of Work: 9:00AM to 5:00 PM. Days of Work: M-F including some evenings. 37.5 hours/week). Submit a resume to Alecia Charles, MPH at alecia.charles@downstate.edu. Please include Job Title (Staff Associate), Line (33336) and Posting ID (13137).

Operations Manager

Duties and Responsibilities: Ensure compliance with internal policies and regulatory requirements such as NYS Department of Health, Joint Commission and the National Committee for Quality Assurance. Conduct staff training in billing, human resources, and patient care. Ensure efficient management of the SHC front desk, supplies, and equipment. Participate in the leadership of the SHC Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program; directly responsible for the identification of QM measures, tracking and development of systems for improvement. Develop, maintain, and execute SHC-specific policies and procedures governing all aspects of service delivery, in coordination with other SHC staff. Required Qualifications: Bachelor’s Degree with at least 5 years’ management experience in an academic medical center with integrated care/research. Experience with EMR and Microsoft Office Applications. Cultural competence required. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Preferred qualifications include bilingual English/Haitian Creole or English/Spanish. Salary Range: $51,366.00-$108,023.00. (Represents Location for F/T appointees. Hours of Work: 9:00AM to 5:00 PM. Days of Work: M-F including some evenings. 37.5 hours/week). Submit a resume to Alecia Charles, MPH at alecia.charles@downstate.edu.

Patient Navigator

Duties and Responsibilities: Provide field-based health education on a monthly or weekly basis and skills building service to patients. Accompany patients to primary care appointments and to other health care and social service encounters. Coordinate ongoing navigation and logistical support for appointment keeping reminders, transportation and childcare arrangements. Track patients’ progress through health education curriculum. Conduct social service benefits reassessment and follow-up. Provide critical feedback to other members of the health care team based on observations. Provide education in the field through electronic health record (EHR) messaging, participation in multidisciplinary care meetings and phone communication. Educate, coach and empower patients. Provide direct observed therapy (DOT) in patients’ homes as needed, observe and record patient self-administration of antiretrovirals (ARVs) and assess for and report ARV related side effects. Document all patient activities on required data forms for submission into eSHARE or an alternative data system. Required Qualifications: AA, AAS degree or equivalent educational credits with at least 3 years of experience working in an agency providing case management, social services or health care services. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Personal experience with HIV, HCV and/or substance use. Preferred Qualifications: 4-year college degree may be substituted for one year of experience. Experience working with HIV+, substance use disorders, and/or mental illness preferred. Experience working with antiretroviral (ARV) clients. Experience working in multidisciplinary and multicultural team setting. Bilingual in English/Spanish or English/Haitian Creole an asset. Experience using electronic health record. Experience working with LGBTQ populations. Experience with preparing educational materials for social media. Salary Range: $37,000-$65,000. Hours of work: Full-time, Monday – Friday, 9:00am - 5:00pm, 37.5 hours per week. Participate in required data collections. Document all patient activities on required data forms for submission into eSHARE or an alternative data system. Participate in interdisciplinary comprehensive treatment plan development and implementation. Participate in interdisciplinary comprehensive treatment plan development and implementation. Required Qualifications: Bachelor’s Degree with at least 5 years’ management experience in an academic medical center with integrated care/research. Experience with EMR and Microsoft Office Applications. Cultural competence required. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Preferred qualifications include bilingual English/Haitian Creole or English/Spanish. Salary Range: $51,366.00-$108,023.00. (Represents Location for F/T appointees. Hours of Work: 9:00AM to 5:00 PM. Days of Work: M-F including some evenings. 37.5 hours/week). Submit a resume to Alecia Charles, MPH at alecia.charles@downstate.edu.

Care Coordinator

The STAR Program is seeking a Care Coordinator to support our patients and to work as part of the interdisciplinary treatment team. The care coordinator will assist patients navigate the healthcare and public benefits systems. This is a great opportunity for social justice advocates or gap year students who desire a position that addresses the social determinants of health through provision of care coordination services to people living with HIV. The Stay and Work with HIV+ clients. Provide direct observed therapy (DOT) in patients’ homes as needed, observe and record patient self-administration of antiretrovirals (ARVs) and assess for and report ARV related side effects. Document all patient activities on required data forms for submission into eSHARE or an alternative data system. Participate in required data collections. Document all patient activities on required data forms for submission into eSHARE or an alternative data system. Participate in interdisciplinary comprehensive treatment plan development and implementation. Participate in interdisciplinary comprehensive treatment plan development and implementation. Required Qualifications: Bachelor’s Degree with at least 5 years’ management experience in an academic medical center with integrated care/research. Experience with EMR and Microsoft Office Applications. Cultural competence required. Effective written, verbal, organizational, and interpersonal skills. Computer literacy. Preferred qualifications include bilingual English/Haitian Creole or English/Spanish. Salary Range: $51,366.00-$108,023.00. (Represents Location for F/T appointees. Hours of Work: 9:00AM to 5:00 PM. Days of Work: M-F including some evenings. 37.5 hours/week). Submit a resume to Alecia Charles, MPH at alecia.charles@downstate.edu. Please include Job Title (Staff Associate), Line (33336) and Posting ID (13137).