

For Immediate Release

\$750K Grant to Fight Opioid Crisis in Southeast Arkansas

October 13, 2017, Lake Village, AR—Arkansas Rural Health Partnership (formerly Greater Delta Alliance for Health, Inc.) was one of ten organizations across the country to receive the HRSA Rural Health Opioid Grant this year. The Arkansas Rural Health Partnership (RHP) project was funded for \$750,000 to address opioid use disorder (OUD) in Southeast Arkansas over the next three years.

The Arkansas Delta Rural Health Opioid Project (RHOP) is the first behavioral health project for the Arkansas RHP, an organization of ten non-profit Arkansas Delta hospitals including Ashley County Medical Center, Baptist Health Medical Center-Stuttgart, Bradley County Medical Center, Chicot Memorial Medical Center, Dallas County Medical Center, Delta Memorial Hospital, DeWitt Hospital & Nursing Home, Drew Memorial Health System, Jefferson Regional Medical Center, and McGehee Hospital.

The Arkansas Delta RHOP will expand locally available screening, education, outreach, case management and counseling services for those at-risk or diagnosed with OUD in eight counties including Arkansas, Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Dallas, Desha, Drew, and Jefferson counties. The project is a collaborative effort between the RHP and the 10th District Substance Abuse Program New Beginnings, C.A.S.A. (Center for Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment) which will provide behavioral health services in the eight county region named in the grant.

“We look forward to being a part of the Arkansas Rural Health Partnership, where so many agencies and services are coming together to address each phase of the epidemic, based on individual needs,” said New Beginnings executive director Mike Knickerbocker.

New Beginnings works with and receives referrals for treatment from district and circuit courts, the Department of Human Services and the Division of Children and Family Services. In 2016 the organization provided a comprehensive range of addiction services to over 1,000 people on a residential and outpatient basis.

The joint RHOP is unique in that it begins in the clinical setting at the local clinic and navigates the patient to counseling services provided by local behavioral health experts. Arkansas RHP hospitals and participating clinics will be able to provide and expand opioid use disorder counseling services by focusing on physician and community education and training to identify individuals at-risk and guide them to recovery by providing case management at the clinic site as well as counseling services via telehealth with a licensed counselor employed by New Beginnings. This project truly represents a community effort that puts all the pieces in place to address this issue.

“This is a huge step forward,” said Knickerbocker. “Through our wrap around care coordination services, our efforts will be monitored daily to insure better outcomes for residents of southeast Arkansas. We at New Beginning Center for Alcohol and Substance Abuse are truly excited about the opportunity afforded our part of the state.”

Drug abuse, specifically prescription drug abuse, was recognized as a serious community problem in the mandatory IRS Community Health Needs Assessments conducted by member hospitals in 2016. According to Arkansas RHP executive director Mellie Bridewell, “Our hospitals are recognizing that they must take a leadership role in addressing community health issues. They also acknowledge that they can’t make a difference without involving local organizations, officials, and professionals. This project brings Southeast Arkansas healthcare organizations, mental and behavioral health organizations, the legal system, and social service organizations together to begin to address these issues we so desperately need to tackle.”

The project also includes building a coalition to address the drug abuse problem in the community. If you are interested in learning more about participating in the coalition, please contact Mellie Bridewell at [870-265-6553](tel:870-265-6553) for more information. For more information on the Arkansas Rural Health Partnership, please visit our website at gdaharkansas.com.