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**Next OTPG Meeting**  
Coastal Community Behavioral Health in Saint Mary's Georgia  
July 20th, 2018

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real help = real hope

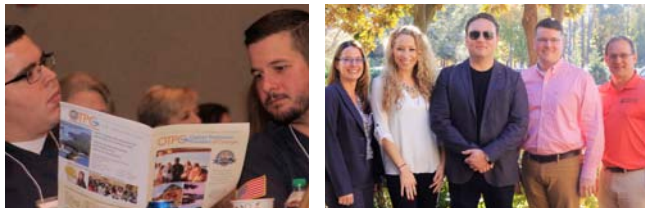
**An OTPG Conference Recap**

By Joelyn Alfred | Lakeland Centres Treatment Center



**A quick look back at our 10th Annual Fall Conference as we celebrated this year's theme of "Making Strides In Medication Assisted Treatment & Marching Towards Recovery."** A quick look back at our 10th Annual Fall Conference as we celebrated this year's theme of "Making Strides In Medication Assisted Treatment & Marching Towards Recovery."

A special thank you to Mark Parrino for being our keynote speaker. Also a very special thank you is given to our faithful sponsors who facilitate our growth every year. It is through their generosity that OTPG is able to promote educational awareness within our industry. On behalf of OTPG, I thank the volunteers, presenters, sponsors, patients, and most importantly each and every one of you who supported our efforts by attending the conference.



**PROUD To Be In Recovery**

By Riley Kirkpatrick | CARES PROUD Program, Advantage Behavioral Health

My name is Riley Kirkpatrick and I am a person in long term recovery. More specifically, I have struggled with IV heroin addiction since age 14. I am now 38 and have numerous trips to inpatient treatment centers, detox centers, psychiatric hospitals, county jails, and prison under my belt. If only I could use some of this experience to have letters after my name, I would have quite a valid education. Although I am very familiar with how the opioid epidemic is being treated, it is through the lens of being a client I have been most familiar in years past. I am aware that I cannot effectively explain the last 25 years of my story, and how I got to where I am, but I will attempt to summarize the gratitude that I have for now being in the field, and not as a client. I would also like to share about the program I now work for. The final pathway that has led me to long term recovery has been through Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT). MAT was controversial in the recovery communities I was in, and it took some time for me to be willing to try this approach to treatment. All of the stigmas I now fight against, I too carried back then. My addiction took me to a place where my desperation was so great, I would have tried anything if it meant freedom from the grip that heroin had over me. I had no idea, from that first day I walked into an OTP, how greatly my life would change and how vast and deep the definition of the word freedom could really be. I often find myself at work, sitting across from a client or in a PROUD group (PROUD is an acronym for Peers in Recovery from Opioid Use and Dependency), wishing I had a program like this offered to me when it was I who was the client.

I am now the MAT Coordinator for the PROUD Program. The PROUD team is made up of four "peers," meaning we are CPS's and CARES, and are each in recovery ourselves. CPS is a Certified Peer Specialist and a CARES is a Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist. The PROUD Program works under the umbrella of Advantage Behavioral Health System, which is located in Athens, GA. As peers we work alongside clinicians, doctors, nurses, counselors and possibly other legal entities, such as probation officers, etc. We are able to connect with the client and play a role in a system of care that is often left unattended or ignored entirely. We get to connect with the clients as equals, there is no power play, and we are not here to punish if they are struggling. We are here to offer support and witness them on their journey. We are here to be taillights for them to follow. We honor, respect, and support our folks along any pathway that feels right and meaningful to them. Each client

## PROUD To Be In Recovery

By Riley Kirkpatrick | CARES PROUD Program, Advantage Behavioral Health

has an individual action plan that is specific to them and only them. We have daily (Mon-Fri) support meetings for PROUD Participants. Our check-ins groups begin with "What's right with you today?" and we are clear about showing up and meeting the client where they are.

PROUD is able to exist because of an 11.8 million dollar grant given over 2 years to the state of Georgia by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which was passed along to Advantage by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD). Advantage/PROUD was able to receive 1.44 million for the first year. This funding helps pay for everything from salaries and overhead, to detox/stabilization, housing and treatment services for clients, core services and even medication costs. We are able to support clients in a multitude of ways that would not be possible without the grant. The only requirement is that the client has an opioid use disorder diagnosis.

Clients come to us in many different phases of their addiction and/or recovery. We connect with some clients the Crisis Stabilization Unit, where they may be beginning detox or induction of buprenorphine/Suboxone, and some are referrals from an OTP or a residential treatment setting. MAT may be an option for some clients, but it is by no means a necessity. We have a doctor and nurse in-house in order serve our outpatient MAT clients, and meet any possible mental health needs. We have access to all of the various programs from Advantage, and we cultivate relationships with other community agencies locally, including various recovery houses and halfway houses. For clients who are either in residential treatment or at a recovery house where suboxone or methadone is not be allowed onsite, we partner with Alliance Recovery Center and DM&ADR for daily dosing to ensure our clients can get their needs met. We also offer once monthly Vivitrol injections for those who may benefit from an opioid blocker. As the program began last year, it was clear there were many other local agencies that had yet to be educated as to the benefits of MAT or had not yet been educated past the stigma. We began offering education to agencies that, up until now, had been unwilling to let clients be on MAT. If we bump into a barrier, whatever it may be, we try to find a way to make it work. We have multiple clients on MAT today, being served by over half a dozen local agencies that had been unwilling or unable to treat clients on MAT even one year ago. I call that progress.

If you are reading this and are curious if clients at your program could benefit from having Peers (CPS/CARES) on staff, I encourage you to explore it as a possibility. CARES, through the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse, is more than willing to certify peers whose pathway to recovery included any form of MAT. If you have clients who are well stabilized who want to go into the field, please let them know it is an option. Slowly but surely we are making headway. Many of you have known for decades the life-saving benefits of medication assisted treatment, at least in our area, and we are finally able to offer it to more clients in conjunction with other forms of treatment. I believe that MAT works for those who need it. As a long term, chronic heroin addict, I will be so bold as to say I am alive right now because I had the option of using medication in conjunction with other forms of treatment. Hopelessness is no longer my state of being. I have grown to expect recovery, for myself, and clients alike.

**If you have any questions or comments regarding the PROUD Program, please contact myself or Cat Clayton Mills.**

**Cat Clayton Mills, Program Manager – PROUD Program**  
cclayton@advantagebhs.org

**Riley Kirkpatrick, MAT Coordinator – PROUD Program**  
rkirkpatrick@advantagebhs.org

**If you would like to refer clients, please have them call**  
1-888-749-3806.



By Stacey Pearce | OTPG AATOD Board Delegate

Hello everyone! It was so wonderful to see many of you in New York, and I apologize for missing you at the most recent OTPG meeting. I hope this beautiful Spring weather has inspired everyone to do something fun and exciting! Speaking of fun and exciting, how many of you came to the open Board Meeting at the AATOD conference?? I don't recall seeing very many of you, so I'll update you on what's happening at the national level.

As is typical of the open board meeting, there were representatives from SAMHSA and DEA to update the field. SAMHSA representatives talked about how some of the STR funds have been used in different states and report that there is expansion of the hub and spoke model, conducted trainings, payment for treatment and medications, provided Naloxone to various groups of people, and many other objectives. Since SAMHSA allowed each State to decide how they were using the funds, there is a wide variety of projects being funded. As many of you know, in Georgia some of the funds were used to hold three two-day training sessions, in different parts of the State, for personnel outside of OTPs to become educated on the opioid crisis, the treatment options, and the value of coordination of care between OTPs and other entities that our patients may encounter. The second round of STR funds have been announced, so hopefully OTPG will be able to provide more of those trainings in the coming year! SAMHSA also reminded us that TIP 63: Medications for Opioid Use Disorder has been published, as well as the Decisions in Recovery: Treatment for Opioid Use Disorders workbook. Both of these are available for digital download from the SAMHSA Store online.

The DEA update was not as enlightening for all of us that have been waiting on the release of some documents that have been in development for years. The updated best practices guidelines to the field is still not released but Jim Arnold with DEA advised us to "know we [DEA] are working hard" to get them released, but no timeline was provided. On the telemedicine front, Mr. Arnold said they have experienced some "bumps in the road" for the special registration for telemedicine and they are still waiting to finalize. Finally, Mr. Arnold relayed that DEA is "pretty darn close" and "hopefully, hopefully we'll get [new mobile van regulations] out soon."

**If you missed the NYC conference in March because you didn't want to travel into Yankee territory, you have a wonderful opportunity to stay in the South for the next AATOD Conference. October 19-23, 2019 the AATOD conference will convene at the Disney Coronado Springs in Orlando Florida. Bring the family for fun and stay for education!**

### THE OTPG FALL CONFERENCE

#### SAVE THE DATE:

NOVEMBER 16, 2018 (FRIDAY)

A NEW LOCATION: A NEW VIBE AT THE EVERGREEN CONFERENCE CENTERSTONE MOUNTAIN, GA. (FEATURE PRESENTER: "DR. MERRILL NORTON") MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!



## My Story

By Cassandra Lee

My name is Cassandra Lee, and I am a woman in long-term recovery. I came to Alliance Recovery Center for the first time in February of 1998, but it wasn't until December of 2007, after being in treatment for almost ten years, that I managed to sustain myself in recovery and take my life seriously. Since then I have had many firsts. The first one obviously being that I have maintained my recovery for over ten years, something I never dreamed possible. For the first time I make an honest living as a home health aide. I take pride in knowing that I am responsible, dependable, and trustworthy; characteristics which took time and effort to embody and exemplify. This is the first time in my life that I have maintained a job, a job I've now worked for over 9 years. I have become financially stable and independent. I now live by myself, no roommates, no boyfriends - no friends on the couch - just me. For the first time I have relationships that are real and genuine, and not based on what someone can do for me or my addiction.

My addiction to drugs and alcohol started as an adolescent and by thirteen years old I was physically and emotionally dependent on intravenous heroin, as well as abusing alcohol and other drugs. I dropped out of school and was on my own, despite still being very much a traumatized and vulnerable child. At sixteen years old I had my daughter. As a young single parent, I needed to support myself and my child. I diluted myself into thinking that if I simply refrained from using the "hard drugs" that I would be ok, so I started dealing drugs. After two years of relative abstinence, I started back using "recreationally" - or so I had tried to convince myself. But like anyone struggling with a substance use disorder who is not engaged in recovery, when the first major crisis erupted in my life, I dealt with it the only way I knew how and turned to my most reliable but treacherous coping skill - drugs. I quickly became dependent and spiraled out of control. Once again, I found myself struggling with opioid use disorder. So, I willingly sent my daughter to live with my mother while I continued to spiral. I got infected with Hepatitis C and developed bacterial endocarditis with MRSA. Eventually I got sick and tired of being sick and tired, so I made the choice to enroll myself in an opioid treatment program. In fact, I went to several different OTPs before I got to Alliance Recovery Center.

Initially I was only utilizing the medication as a form of harm reduction, but I was still missing the most important part of the OTP- the counseling and recovery involvement.

After being at ARC for about six years with minimal treatment progress and continued use of illicit substances, I was facing an administrative detox and discharge from the program. This was a huge problem - I would be back out on the streets. Ultimately the treatment team compromised with me, agreeing that I could remain on the program with the stipulation that I would participate in group therapy everyday prior to receiving my medication. This went on for another four years before I was able to maintain my recovery for more than one week. But the biggest difference was the compassion, connection, and support I received. It was in those groups that I learned the true purpose of medication assisted treatment. To keep the body stable and out of withdrawal so the mind can focus and learn how not to use drugs- how to identify triggers and utilize supports and positive coping mechanisms. I learned that methadone is only a tool within the recovery process; that it is treatment with a side of medication. Learning this had an enormous impact on me and my beliefs about medication assisted treatment, as I had always believed the multitude of stigmas associated with it.

**With the stigma of addiction as a moral failing rather than a brain disease, most people in our lives, both family and friends, and society as a whole, get burned out and frustrated with their addicted love one and simply give up on them. But there is hope. There is help. I was in treatment for over ten years before finally learning and utilizing the skills necessary to maintain long-term recovery. It takes work everyday and will be a lifelong commitment, but my recovery is worth it. I am worth it.**

## Ride To Recovery

By Taylor Crump | Tri-State Treatment Center

Reliable transportation is something that many OTP patients struggle with and worry about. If they don't have someone to drive them to their preferred treatment facility or do not have the legal documents required to drive themselves, attending treatment regularly can become a burden. Not having reliable transportation often a barrier to someone making a true commit to treatment.

Thanks to a former counselor from a local opioid treatment program, those participating in recovery can feel relieved. Candice McAllie has started a new transportation service for those specifically in opioid treatment programs. Ride to Recovery, or "R to R", is up and running and looking to help out anyone who is in need of transportation in the North Georgia area. She has reached out to local North Georgia programs and asked for us all to pass along her information. Candice says she hopes to have more than the one van that will run from Knoxville Tennessee to clinics in the North Georgia Area.

Some of us may remember the old transportation vans that ran from Knoxville to our area. Some say they left a "bad taste" because there were simply no rules to follow. Candice hopes to change that and make a difference. She requires that any take home medication be locked in a separate part of the van. Patients will not have access to their medication during the ride. On the back of her business card she lists that there will be no illicit substances allowed, no weapons, no aggression, and of course confidentiality is necessary. The fee to use this service is \$20.00 round trip, but when you think of the legal fees that can come with a DUI, or driving with no license, the price pales in comparison.

I asked about any set schedule that she may have at this time and she is willing to pick up and go where she needs to. This may change once she starts to get a little busier. Just meeting with Candice was a real joy. It is only her and one van at this time, but she hopes that this can become a big project that many benefit from. It is great to see that someone has taken a step to help out the corner of North Georgia. We all want to see our patients succeed and having reliable transportation is one of the ways to make that happen. If you have not spoken to Candice about Ride to Recovery or would like more information for your patients her contact information is 423-315-7225 or ridetorecovery@gmail.com

**OTPG is proud to introduce on-site training and education, So what are you waiting for? Schedule a free consultation TODAY. Call Joelyn Alfred at (770) 840-9912**

### On SALE NOW!

The OTPG video "Exploring the World of Opioid Addiction" is for sale. \$40.00 for non-members of OTPG and \$10.00 for member clinics. Call Brook Etherington (404) 377-7669 or email betherington1@gmail.com

## Upcoming Training EVENTS

By Ali McCorkle | DM & ADR, Inc.

Improving the Group Experience for Resistant Clients with Substance Use Disorders.

6/15/18.

Lawrenceville. [www.addictionsolutions.org](http://www.addictionsolutions.org).

6th Annual ADACBGA Conference.

Recovery: The Heroic Journey of Promise and Possibility.

6/17/18-6/23/18.

[www.adacbga.org](http://www.adacbga.org).

Please stop by and visit our OTPG booth!

Pharmacology and Neurobiology of Addiction.

7/27/18.

Lawrenceville. [www.addictionsolutions.org](http://www.addictionsolutions.org)

Ethics, Legal Issues in Addiction & Tele-Therapy.

8/10/18.

Lawrenceville. [www.addictionsolutions.org](http://www.addictionsolutions.org)

Theories & Brief Interventions.

8/10/18.

Marietta. [www.actsconsulting.com](http://www.actsconsulting.com)

Fundamentals of Addiction Counseling.

8/11/18.

Marietta. [www.actsconsulting.com](http://www.actsconsulting.com)

Legal and Ethical Issues in Behavioral Health.

9/18/18.

Macon. [www.pesi.com](http://www.pesi.com)

Shame and Addiction.

9/21/18.

Athens. [www.actsconsulting.com](http://www.actsconsulting.com)

## Come Join Us! become an OTPG member

The annual membership dues are listed below and are based on the current patient census of your facility.

•0-149 patients: \$250

•150-299 patients: \$500

•300-499 patients: \$1,000

•500+ patients: \$1,500

Please visit our web site for more information on membership.

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STONE MOUNTAIN, GA.  
(FEATURE PRESENTER:  
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MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!



Get to know the OTPG board members visit [www.otpggeorgia.org](http://www.otpggeorgia.org)

#### The benefits available to members of OTPG:

- Four free one CEC trainings during 2017
- Access to free hotline maintained by Jackson-Lewis PC, labor and employment law specialists
- Membership with the American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (AATOD)
- Discounted education opportunities
- Affiliation with community organizations
- Updated state and federal information to include statistics, changes to regulations, available funds, etc.
- Chance to network within our industry
- Ability to purchase discounted copies of "Exploring the World of Opioid Addiction"

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