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**Next OTPG Meeting Virtual April 14th**

**Board Members:**

<b>Brook Etherington</b> President	<b>Leslie Sitkoff</b> Secretary
<b>Ali McCorkle</b> Vice President	<b>Stacey Pearce</b> AATOD Delegate
<b>John Haigler</b> Treasurer	<b>Zac Talbott</b> Parliamentarian



real help = real hope

**Message from the President** By Brook Etherington, MA | President, OTPG



Happy Spring everyone. It is definitely that time of year when everything turns yellow, and we all have runny noses. That is my pessimistic COVID mind describing our new season. But we all know that everything that was once dormant, or dead, comes alive again this time of year. I'm personally trying to think in those more positive terms right now. Over the past year, life has been hard on us as individuals, and the people we work with, clients, peers, and staff. I can rattle off a list of all the things we lost over the past year, but I believe I can summarize them all in one word, connection. We lost connection. But thankfully, we are starting to see some signs that we are on our way back to normal. But it is not really going to be a return to what was once our normal, is it?

COVID-19 saw many parts of our former normal die or lay dormant. But we are now entering a place where we can start to resurrect some of the connections we have lost, or at least begin to think about it as a future reality. Group therapy comes to mind! But our collective situation also allows us a unique opportunity to grow as people and as an industry.

Many lessons were learned last year. We get to keep the positive and allow ourselves to have a new perspective as a result of the negative. We get to begin again with a new sense of what is really important. I hope we can restore all of the connections we lost amongst each other and recreate the much needed connections people living with OUD need to truly and fully recover. But let's do it better, and make them stronger this year..

**NOTE from the Editor**  
By Shannon Corda | Assistant Program Director  
Alliance Recovery Center Athens

As we pass the year mark of the COVID pandemic, I hope that people are starting to feel hopeful about the future. I think it's a pretty commonly accepted understanding in recovery that connection is vital, which has been difficult in a mostly isolated year.



Let's celebrate getting through one of the most difficult years that many of us have ever experienced, and hold space for health care and mental health care workers who have been such a crucial part of people getting

through this process. You're all amazing and should be so proud of the work you've done and continue to do.

## NOTE from a Peer Support Specialist

By Samantha Presley

Hi, my name is Samantha Presley, I am a woman in long term recovery and what that means to me is I have not felt the need to change the way I feel with illegal mood- or mind-altering substances in 4 years and 11 months. What my recovery has afforded me is the opportunity to be a dependable mother to my sixteen-year-old daughter, as well as giving me a purpose in life to give back to my community through peer support services. I am a Certified Addiction Recovery Empowerment Specialist (CARES) and a Certified Peer Specialist for Addictive Disease (CPS-AD). I have a career as Peer support specialist at Alliance Recovery Center. My purpose at Alliance is to support my peers on their recovery journey.

Specifically, what that means is I walk along beside my peers as they set self-made goals. I have had the opportunity to assist a peer as he went to the eye doctor and received glasses for the very first time. I have also had the pleasure to see a peer set a goal of getting his license and obtaining a job shortly after being released from prison. Daily I get to check in with my peers to see what is right with them and how recovery is adding value to the peer’s life. My role here at Alliance Recovery Center includes assisting my peers in articulating their goals for recovery, learning, and practicing new skills, helping them monitor their progress and modeling effective coping techniques, supporting them in advocating for themselves to obtain effective services and developing and implementing recovery plans. Recovery has giving me a second chance to live a purpose filled life and that purpose is to support others as they find their own recovery pathway.



real help = real hope [www.otpgeorgia.org](http://www.otpgeorgia.org)

## Exciting Harm Reduction Opportunities in Athens

With the legalization of syringe services in Georgia in 2019, 2021 marks the beginning of in house harm reduction services for patients at Alliance Recovery Center in Athens, Georgia.

Our program, “All Bottled Up,” features a small plastic bottle with syringes, alcohol prep pads, bandaids, gauze, a fentanyl test strip, sterile water, a tourniquet, cooker, twist tie for holding the cooker, and cotton filters. Patients are being encouraged to take as many kits as they like, with the intention of using the plastic bottle as a portable sharps container to return their supplies and to have fresh, one use only materials for every use. Patients are encouraged



to take any additional supplies they may need and are given whatever they request, without requirement of one for one, though we are encouraging them to return syringes in a safe manner for appropriate disposal. Also available to

patients are materials for safer smoking, safer sex, and of course Narcan, and future plans for kits for sex workers.

**In just 8 weeks of starting this program, we have served 32 patients, distributed 153 needles, and collected 26 needles.**



Our services are only available to active patients here at Alliance, though we are happily referring anyone else to the other new syringe services here in

Athens, Access Point, a non profit founded by — Brook Etherington, Riley Kirkpatrick, and Ali McCorkle. We are super excited about our growing opportunities to serve people with opiate use disorder and look forward to the growth that continues to come!

### “ Quotes Worth Noting “



“After entering OAT (opiate agonist treatment), women using injection drugs and engaging in sex work represent a particularly vulnerable group showing poorer psychological health and a higher use of heroin and cocaine compared to women not engaging in sex work.”

K;, Jeal N;Macleod J;Salisbury C;Turner. “Identifying Possible Reasons Why Female Street Sex Workers Have Poor Drug Treatment Outcomes: a Qualitative Study.” BMJ Open, U.S. National Library of Medicine, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28336736/.

“Participants described how feeling unable to discuss their sex work in drug treatment groups undermined their engagement in the treatment process. They outlined how disclosure of sex work resulted in stigma from male and female service users as well as adverse interactions with male service users. Participants highlighted that non-disclosure meant they could not discuss unresolved trauma issues which were common and which emerged or increased when they reduced their drug use.”

Marchand, Kirsten, et al. “Sex Work Involvement among Women with Long-Term Opioid Injection Drug Dependence Who Enter Opioid Agonist Treatment.” Harm Reduction Journal, BioMed Central, 25 Jan. 2012, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3281790/.

### Access Point

<https://www.accesspointga.org/>  
[accesspointgeorgia@gmail.com](mailto:accesspointgeorgia@gmail.com)  
(706) 372-2031

### Atlanta Harm Reduction

<https://atlantaharmreduction.org/>  
[ahrcemail@ahrc-atl.org](mailto:ahrcemail@ahrc-atl.org)  
(404) 817-9994

## Spring Virtual Meeting 2021:

Our next OTPG meeting is April 14th

## GA COVID-19 Hotline

### COVID vaccine sites in GA

<https://dph.georgia.gov/locations/covid-vaccination-site>



This hotline is for questions about COVID-19 and COVID vaccine only, not for scheduling appointments for vaccination.

( 888 ) 357-0169

COVID vaccine – all Georgians  
16 and over eligible

## 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.



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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