

Open Hand Atlanta Request for Support of Medically Required Nutrition Supplements for PLWHA

Who we are: Open Hand, a locally-operated nonprofit organization serving metropolitan Atlanta for 28 years,

What we do: provides Medical Nutrition Therapy including nutrition assessments and counseling and Medically Required Nutrition Supplements, as well as Support Services: Food via freshly cooked, nutritionally balanced prepared meals (including therapeutic and mechanical soft meals), pantry meals, and meal replacement snacks. Open Hand's services provide nutritional support services coordinated for clients in conjunction with their primary care providers, assuring clients are linked to and receiving primary health care services and other needed sources of treatment/care - supporting a comprehensive Atlanta EMA HIV/AIDS continuum of care

When and where we do it: We operate/deliver seven days/week from our midtown Atlanta commercial kitchen on Ottley Drive, currently providing services to 17 counties, 13 of which are within the Atlanta Eligible Metropolitan Area (EMA). Our Registered Dietitians provide Medical Nutrition Therapy in 4 local clinics serving persons with HIV/AIDS, and in community locations for other audiences.

Why: We began as a group of friends who assembled to cook meals for people dying of AIDS.

How we do what we do: With the help of more than 9000 volunteers (2015) from the community, staff prepare, package and deliver more than a million nutritious meals/ year for persons from 1-104 years of age, including those living with symptomatic HIV/AIDS or with other critical illnesses or disabilities.

Our results: During the last 28 years, we have served more than 20 million nutritionally balanced meals to individuals living with symptomatic HIV/AIDS and other chronic/critical illnesses/disabilities - served without regard to race, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, or national origin - whose financial resources and health complications impact their ability to provide/prepare meals to care for themselves.

The need: The 2011¹ *Atlanta EMA HIV Consumer Survey* conducted by the Southeast AIDS Training and Education Center (SEATEC) substantiated the need for Medically Required Nutrition Supplements (Glucerna, Ensure) prescribed by clients' healthcare providers due to poor nutritional status among respondents was 53.3%, while 27.7% of respondents indicated they needed but did not receive this service – the third largest gap in service reported. Last year, with funding from the Fulton County Ryan White Program for the Atlanta 20-county Eligible Metropolitan Area and Fulton County Human Services Grant partial year funding, we were able to provide a total of 39,541 supplements. However, Fulton County's Human Services Grants deleted the HIV/AIDS population from its current year's funding, and Ryan White funding cuts in support of nutrition services, mean 24,322 fewer supplements are supported than during 2015.

HIV-related Nutrition Issues, Causes, and Effects on Patient Health

Nutrition Issues & Causes	Effects on Patient Health
Lack of adequate intake at same time as virus increases the body's calorie needs. Lack of appetite from depression, side effects of drugs, pain, mouth sores, difficulty swallowing, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weight loss and muscle wasting, which alters vital organ function and compromises treatment effectiveness.• Severe malnutrition and wasting significantly contributes to increased morbidity and mortality.
HIV virus damages intestine so it can't absorb	

¹ Results from the 2011 Atlanta EMA Consumer Survey are the latest available due to the Health Resources and Services Administration's change to a new AIDS Education and Training Center provider after the most recent survey was held.

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and utilize nutrients. Opportunistic infections and medication side effects can further impact absorption of nutrients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anorexia, pain, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.• Nutrient (vitamin or mineral) deficiencies and protein-energy malnutrition, which influence susceptibility to HIV infection, impair immune function, and negatively impact the progression from HIV to AIDS and from AIDS to death.• Drug-food interactions influence absorption/serum concentration of medications and side effects, impact viral resistance/suppression – determining effectiveness and tolerability of Highly Active Antiretroviral Treatment (HAART) regimens.• May also increase the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, gallbladder disease, and alterations in bone metabolism.• Changes in body shape may interfere with daily activities including exercising, sleeping, breathing.
Altered metabolism of nutrients due to immune dysfunction, medication side effects, opportunistic infections, hormonal alterations, and/or HIV may initiate development of metabolic abnormalities including dyslipidemia, increased triglycerides, low high-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels, abnormal carbohydrate metabolism, and insulin resistance	
Development of fat redistribution syndrome or lipodystrophy	

The above-outlined nutrition issues and health effects experienced by persons living with symptomatic HIV/AIDS often lead healthcare providers to prescribe Glucerna (for persons managing carbohydrate intake, such as those with diabetes) or Ensure for their 9-10 grams of protein and 24 essential vitamins and minerals including antioxidants. Glucerna's carbohydrates are specifically designed to be slowly digested, therefore help persons with diabetes manage blood glucose levels.

Program budget: The cost to Open Hand for the 39,541 Medically Required Nutrition Supplements provided last year totaled \$92,130.53. This year's Ryan White funding covers \$35,460.97, leaving a gap of \$56,669.66.

Our request: We respectfully request \$14,166.40 to cover our cost for 6,080 Medically Required Nutrition Supplements – one-fourth of the current gap for this service.

How funds will support the provision of needed comprehensive care: Open Hand collaborates with local AIDS Service Organizations, health care providers, and caseworkers to ensure people living with symptomatic HIV/AIDS receive nutritional services provided by our agency and effective coordination across the full spectrum of care. A Gurvey et al. study *Examining health care costs among MANNA clients and a comparison group*² demonstrated clients receiving nutrition services experienced lower monthly healthcare costs, fewer and shorter hospitalizations, and were more often to be released home from the hospital rather than to long-term care or a healthcare facility. Our clients living with symptomatic HIV/AIDS benefit from the attention given to ensuring appropriate nutrition levels essential in combating malnutrition, preventing progression of disease, and helping persons with compromised immune systems and related complications/health issues to retain a greater measure of health and self-reliance, live independently within their own homes, and experience shorter hospital stays.

Who is eligible for this support: Open Hand provides services at no charge to eligible clients. We require certification every six months of medical eligibility for all PLWHA accessing meals, snacks, and medically required nutrition supplements services, in order to ensure they are currently accessing and receiving care.

² <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23799677>