



ARIANNA'S CENTER



Population Served and Organization Background

Arianna's Center's primary focus population is Transgender people. Our core clients are **Transgender Women of Color (TWC)**, particularly Latina and Black transgender women. TWC are the most vulnerable population of people in South Florida. South Florida continues to lead the country in new cases of HIV and recent needs assessments in the area have shown rates are highest amongst the transgender population with over 44% of Black transgender women and over 23% of Latina transgender women identifying as HIV positive. They suffer disproportionate rates of infection, employment and housing discrimination as well as prejudice related stigma which has resulted in high instances of violence and hate crimes.

Annually we serve over 350 Trans people, the majority of these clients access multiple services offered by Arianna's Center and are in ongoing case management overseen by our trans peer navigators. While the majority of our clients are Latina and Black trans women, we serve all members of the transgender community. We continually hear from our clients about a number of barriers they encounter on a daily basis. These include:

- Lack of transgender specific mental health and rehabilitation programs
- Lack of HIV prevention services in jails and prisons
- Limited housing programs that are not meeting the needs of the transgender community
- A lack of data relating to the needs of the transgender community
- A lack of protocols at traditional healthcare providers for providing care to the transgender community
- A lack of resources dedicated to addressing the needs of the ageing transgender community
- A lack of bilingual resources

The lack of services that address the specific needs of transgender individuals in a safe, respectful and transaffirming environment this has resulted in transgender women of color not receiving the healthcare and services that they need and deserve.

Founded in 2015 by transgender activist Arianna Lint, Arianna's Center is a direct service and advocacy organization based in South Florida with a mission to uplift and support transgender women of color in Florida, Puerto Rico and beyond. We provide free mobile HIV testing and match clients to care and prevention, case management to help with name changes, referrals for legal support and provide overall linkage to medical and mental health care.

We also provide emergency safe housing for trans women in distress and those released from incarceration and ICE detention. We provide scholarships for GED and technical school as well as coaching to help trans women enter the workforce. On the advocacy front, we train trans women of color to become activists and help educate elected leaders at all levels of government on issues and policy that are vital to the lives of people of trans experience. All services provided by Arianna's Center are offered in both English and Spanish.

We place a special emphasis on centering leadership of **People Living With HIV (PLWH)** and the transgender community. Cultural competency and sensitivity to serving the transgender community is at our core and personified by our CEO and Founder Arianna Lint. Arianna's Center is the only organization in SouthFlorida catering to transgender women of color that is led by an openly HIV positive transgender latina woman. Arianna was recognized most recently with the 2019 Robert Wood Johnson Health Equity Award.

Our team of transgender case managers and direct service officers all lead from a place of real life and trauma informed experience, many of the team have experienced the same issues that we seek to address such as homelessness, unemployment and navigating living with HIV. This is critical to providing services that really speak to and understand the needs and experiences of the population we serve and form an integral part of building trust with our clients. Our goal is to add 2 more trans peer navigators in the next 12 months to further expand our ability to serve the community. All services provided by Arianna's Center are available in English and Spanish.



Arianna's Center leadership and clients participating in our advocacy program

HIV Testing and Prevention Program

The Diana Project is a signature initiative created by Arianna's Center in memory of South Florida transgender activist, Diana Hemingway, to continue her legacy of hard work to benefit and uplift the needs of the transgender community. Diana was a courageous advocate who dedicated her life to take much needed care and support for marginalized trans women, mostly of color, to go beyond what is convenient, and bring education and services into their neighborhoods and communities. Diana would target transgender women, mostly sex workers and the homeless and provide them with testing and any other care needed. She would go to hotels, shelters, or any other place necessary to meet these women where they were and supply the care needed at the moment.

The purpose of this program is to reach the most vulnerable members in the community who are at a heightened risk for HIV/AIDS exposure and infection. Often, transgender individuals do not trust medical facilities available to the wider community. As a result, Arianna's Center has resolved to provide door-to-door service HIV testing for these individuals. Taking a page from Diana's hard work, The Diana Project aims to bring HIV testing to transgender women of color, going to the homes, hotels, shelters or any place where transgender women may be located. The goal is to make HIV testing and post care accessible, with the added privacy and comfort necessary to ensure that HIV testing becomes commonplace for the people that need it most. Our program also seeks to service cis gender men who are attracted to and are often sexual partners of transgender women. The program is provided throughout South Florida, with regular visits in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties.

In 2018-2019, The Diana Project administered more than 240 HIV tests to transgender women of color in our community. Our initial objective for the two-year cycle was to test 200 women of color, and we surpassed that by more than 40 tests. On average: 75% Latinx, 20%, Black/Afro Caribbean and 5% other. We identified more than ten (10) types of testing locations that included hotels, motels, trans bars streets/under bridges, offices, private homes and flea markets. Our clients understand that we are an important bridge to their health and well being, so they seek us out regularly for testing and services.

Our goal is to ensure that as many clients as possible are linked to the services they need. That means ensuring that those who test reactive for HIV are immediately linked to care and those who test non reactive are linked to prevention services. Since 2015 we have worked with trusted local providers such as Care Resource, Midway Clinic and AIDS Healthcare Foundation to link clients to these services. We are very aware of the fact that a negative interaction when navigating healthcare can prevent TWOC from accessing essential care and our policy is to ensure that clients are always linked to providers who have proven to be sensitive to the needs of

the transgender community. In July 2020, our goal is to expand to offer services in San Juan, Puerto Rico and the city's vicinity.

The Diana project has also played a role in empowering TWOC to affect change in their immediate communities, with a number of our former clients having become certified themselves in the State of Florida as HIV testers.



Team Arianna Members with Founder Arianna Lint at an HIV outreach event

Condom Distribution

At Arianna's Center we place an emphasis on prevention through both condoms and PREP and our condom distribution program is an integral support piece in our HIV programming. As a part of our commitment to prevention we provide unlimited condoms to our clients through our partnership with the Florida Department of Health. We are always looking for ways to expand the number of locations we make these available. Currently they are available at the Arianna's Center office in Wilton Manors, directly from our testers when they visit clients in the field, at all social and educational events that are held by Arianna's Center and clients can always contact us to arrange to pick up or have them delivered.

Name and Gender Marker Change Support

Arianna's center offers assistance with name change and gender marker change services. Our case managers are with the client from the start to the finish of the process. We are able to assist with administrative costs associated with the process and also letters to the clients treating physicians requesting letters of support. In cases where the process needs to be overseen by an attorney we work with a small group of local attorneys who donate their time and expertise to our clients so that they do not incur any costs.

Post Incarceration Support Services

Statistics show that 1 in 6 transgender people have experienced incarceration and of those, 2 in 6 black transgender people have experienced incarceration. Our post incarceration support services cater to TWOC who have been released from either incarceration or ICE detention centers. With most individuals in the United States being incarcerated according to their gender at birth rather than their gender identity the unique trauma experienced by TWOC requires increased support services and resources upon release.

Arianna's Center operates a total of 4 emergency safe house beds specifically for HIV positive TWOC who have been released from incarceration or ICE detention. Due to demand each bed has a limit of 2 weeks duration of stay. During this period we work to link the client to permanent housing, ensure they are linked to HIV care and navigate social welfare.

For some clients who have friends and family in other cities or states willing to provide housing we fund reunion transportation costs.



Arianna's Center Meal and Mask distribution event

Education Linkage Services

Systematic discrimination and stigma has stripped many of our clients of access and support for basic education. Lack of education along with discrimination presents significant barriers to many TWOC gaining employment and we are seeking to address this through our case management services. For the past two years we also offer G.E.D. enrollment and English language (E.S.O.L.) enrollment as part of case management. We link clients to local high schools in their area where they can take evening classes to receive their G.E.D. and/or improve their English Language skills. We strongly believe that supporting our clients with the tools to live life as their authentic selves and increasing employment opportunities through education are important pieces in the process of HIV prevention.



Arianna's Center Scholarship Recipients

Advocacy/Leadership Development and Stigma Reduction

Recently Arianna's Center initiated a project aimed at training HIV positive transgender women of color to become advocates for their community. This project consists of a series of group and one on one trainings that focus on personal storytelling and advocacy and gives participants an opportunity to meet in person with local community leaders and decision makers to share their needs and concerns. The goal of this project is to empower the voices of our community and reduce the stigma surrounding HIV.

As an organization led by a TWOC openly living with HIV we're committed to reducing stigma through public advocacy. Our leadership regularly speaks at events around the country and online to help put a face to HIV and center the power of transgender women living with HIV.

Social Determinants

While both Broward County and Miami-Dade County have ordinances that ban discrimination based on gender identity we know this type of discrimination still affects our clients and community and so many of their daily experiences are marked by it. Many are homeless, or close to homeless and without resources to access transportation which in turn has left them without adequate access to healthcare.

With unemployment rates disproportionately high amongst TWOC many work in untraditional markets such as survival sex work leaving them open to violence and endangering their health making them particularly vulnerable to contracting HIV. Through our HIV testing Prevention program (The Diana Project) we aim to address this coupled with ongoing case management designed to empower and uplift. The lived experiences of our trans peer navigators is vital in this process

Online Programming and COVID-19 Response

In early March of 2020 much of our day to day work was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and we had to quickly find ways to stay connected with our clients and community. From an initial simple Facebook Live post, Cafecito with Team Arianna (CTA) was born. The idea behind CTA was to connect with the community as a team. It is a format that starts with sharing community resources such as healthcare, access to food, shelter and financial assistance as well as general community resources and then an invitation for questions and community discussion. CTA is offered in English on Mondays and in Spanish on Thursdays when it is presented by our Prevention Officer Abigail Pereira.

CTA also features guest speakers and is proving to be a great way to connect people and bring a number of resources into one platform for our clients and community to access.

CTA will continue to feature topics such as access to PREP, HIV education, writing resumes, the name and gender marker change process, applying for financial assistance, developing personal advocacy skills and more. Our goal is for these resources to live on after initial streaming and to be ongoing sources of information and learning for anyone who needs them.

In addition to CTA we have also developed a Community Catch UP (CCU). CCU is an hour long program where we invited community leaders, activists and elected officials to join us to discuss the latest issues affecting the transgender community and also to answer questions that viewers have. Our most recent guests were Florida State Representative Shevrin Jones and Camille Lewis of Empower U.

We also recognize that we all need an opportunity to relax and unwind and we've dedicated Fridays to a series of fun tutorials to help relieve stress and anxiety through craft and cooking. Our first program was focused on an origami tutorial. We're conscious of making sure that anything we present is easy, affordable and accessible. These Friday tutorials are all about self care and taking the time to check in with each other and ensure we're taking steps to address our mental health and wellbeing.

One of the biggest challenges for many in our community is just being able to put a meal on the table. We have developed a partnership with The Miami Dolphins Football Unites program to address this need. Thanks to Football Unites we now have access to over 140 meals a day for our clients. Meals are delivered to our offices 2 times a day for lunch (70 meals) and dinner (70 meals). These freshly made meals are provided by their local partner restaurants and we are responsible for taking delivery of them, identifying recipients and delivering them to individuals.

Our team alone doesn't have the capacity to be able to deliver meals twice a day and provide our regular services so we are using this as an opportunity to provide financial assistance to members of the TGNC community by paying weekly stipends to deliver meals. We are providing safety and sanitary products including gloves, face masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning products. Our strategic partnership with Florida International University also has meant we have been able to offer personal care packages to clients which include items such as soap, toothbrushes, nail files, face masks and cleansing wipes.

In addition to this service we are addressing the direct requests we are receiving for assistance with anything from groceries to phone bills, with payments ranging between \$25 and \$75.



Arianna's Center Meal Distribution

Partnerships & Collaboration

Arianna's Center currently has partnerships with The Florida Department of Health, AIDS healthcare Foundation, and serves as the 2020 Chair The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Elevate Program as well as Chairing the Puerto Rico chapter of FLUX. We also work as part of the Florida International University's TRUST program which studies disparities in healthcare from transgender women of color.

Arianna's Center can't adequately serve the community without investing in collaboration with community partners. We work with organizations such as TransSocial and Equality Florida to ensure that clients have access to as many resources as possible.

Arianna's Center is also a member of the Miami Dolphin's Football Unites family, designed to increase understanding and collaboration across communities in South Florida.



Arianna's Center with the Miami Dolphin's Football Unites Program

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is essential for not only ensuring quality of the services provided but also ensuring that our services are meeting the needs of our community. By tracking client demographics in detail we're able to identify patterns and needs within specific areas of our community. Our initial intake form covers the following:

- Age
- Race
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation

The following are encouraged but optional:

- Employment Status
- Housing Status
- Immigration Status
- Experience of Incarceration
- Education level attained
- HIV Status

We measure our HIV testing program based on the number of tests administered as a whole and then break these numbers down into tests administered to existing clients and tests administered to new clients. We also track linkages to care and prevention both as a whole and by existing and new clients.

Our goal is to ensure that all clients who seek testing remain in some form of case management, whether it is comprehensive services or quarterly check in by our trans peer navigators.



Arianna's Center Founder & CEO Arianna Lint receiving the 2019 Robert Wood Johnson Health Equity Award