

Expanding Services to Parenting Women with Substance Use Disorder

Activities, Highlights, and Lessons Learned from DHS's Women's Integrated Care (WIC) Hubs 1.0 Program

The Women's Integrated Care Hubs 1.0 program (Hubs) expanded the crisis services and enhanced the culturally and linguistically responsive services offered by substance use providers. Started in winter 2022, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division (BHD) partnered with three Twin Cities-based substance use providers to pilot the Hubs grant: Avivo, Ramsey County Community Human Services, and RS EDEN.

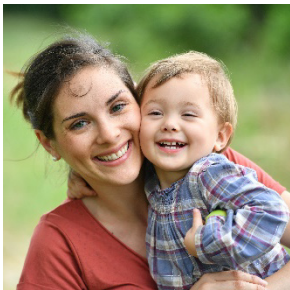
The following report provides information and highlights of the two-year grant program, including:

- An overview of the organizations funded through the Hubs grant
- A description of Hubs activities
- Lessons learned through the grant and areas for future momentum
- A summary of methods used to collect information for this report and related limitations



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Want to know more about the women served by the three Hubs grantees? Access Wilder’s [previous Women's Recovery Services report](#) – to learn more about the demographics, quality of life, and outcomes achieved by individuals served by Hubs grantees through the Women’s Recovery Services grant.

Overview: Funders and grantees of WIC Hubs 1.0

In October 2022, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division (BHD) partnered with three substance use providers to pilot the Women’s Integrated Care Hubs 1.0 program: Avivo, Ramsey County Community Human Services, and RS EDEN. The two-year program allowed grantees to expand the crisis services they offer and to enhance their culturally and linguistically responsive services. While the specific activities varied by each grantee – from hiring a street outreach worker, offering parenting courses, and providing staff with intercultural assessments – all three Hubs grantees are located in the Twin Cities metro area. The following provides a description of each grantee organization and their Hubs 1.0 work from October 2022 – March 2024.

Grantees Hubs 1.0

Work provided Hubs 1.0

Mothers Achieving Recovery for Family Unity

MARFU is a program of Avivo, a multicultural organization based in South Minneapolis. The ultimate goal of MARFU is to improve treatment support and recovery for pregnant women and women with dependent children, including their families, who have substance use disorders.

- Street outreach to prospective clients through mobile assessments, referrals, transportation support, and overdose medication kits
- Expanded peer recovery support services for current and prospective clients

Mothers First

This is a program within the Division of Ramsey County Children and Family Services that serves women living in Ramsey County who are pregnant and/or parenting dependent children, and who are in treatment, recently out of treatment, or want to go to treatment. The program meets participants where they are and supports them as they define their own success.

- Staff and client training around health and safety topics (such as CPR, car seats, trauma and resiliency)
- Client support for housing, groceries, and emergency needs
- Career development and education support for clients
- Celebration events for clients and community members

RS EDEN Continuum of Care

This program provides treatment and recovery services to meet the unique needs of pregnant or parenting women recovering from substance abuse/dependency. The primary goal of the RS EDEN program is to provide services that meet the unique needs of poly-drug abusing women.

- Street outreach to prospective clients
- Deepened engagement and training provision to partner orgs
- Community-wide events for families to support basic needs, recruit new clients, and connect individuals to needed services
- Self-care and family fun activities for current clients

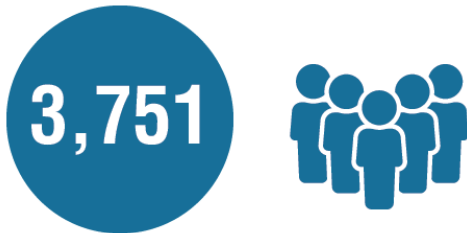
Activities and supports

Grantee organizations used Hubs 1.0 funds to provide a range of services and supports. The following summarizes the specific activities and resources provided through the Hubs grant. Please note that some Hubs activities served multiple purposes, and thus were included in the counts of more than one activity type (such as a community-wide celebration that also met basic needs through the provision of back-to-school supplies). In addition to events and activities, grant funds that were used to respond to emerging needs of clients are detailed under the section, “Additional support and services provided to clients through Hubs 1.0.”

Through Hubs 1.0, grantee organizations...

Engaged:

Community members



Families



55

Hosted 55 events, activities, and trainings

7

Provided language interpretation at 7 events (including Spanish, Hmong, Karen, and Somali)

49%

Of activities involved new client recruitment

91%

Of activities included an educational component for staff or community members

Hubs 1.0 activities and events included:

Meeting basic needs & providing needed support (24 activities)

- Back to school events
- Winter clothing/gear handout
- Lasagna night and other meals

Community-wide events to support and honor families (18 activities)

- Indigenous Peoples' Day celebration
- Mother's Day celebration
- Summer BBQ
- ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) celebration

Education, awareness building, training efforts (15 activities)

- Childhood trauma and healing training for staff and community members
- Trainings on youth homelessness
- Listening sessions

Family-fun or self-care activities for clients (14 activities)

- Zoo trip
- Women's Beach Day
- Client haircuts
- Family orchard visits

Street outreach, SUD assessments, direct client recruitment (7 activities)

- Outreach and SUD assessments through a mobile clinic
- Outreach at community events (including block parties and neighborhood events)

Additional support and services provided to clients through Hubs 1.0

- Housing support (rental insurance, access to housing)
- Education and career support (assisting former clients to become certified peer recovery specialists and/or obtain their LADC).
- Driver's license reinstatement
- Support with utility bills, groceries, and other household needs)

“We did a whole back to school community event. We handed out shoes, backpacks, and haircuts. The line that was outside our door, it was amazing. And it was fun to see a lot of these kids and families do the things that families with jobs would normally do. But for moms and families that struggle financially, we were able to get it done in a very dignified way.”

-Hubs grantee staff member

“Hubs helped us to connect with the broader community, even when the event was over. Now they know our program as a community resource and know the name of a staff person. ... The Hubs work in partnership with the community has given our organization a positive name again in our county.”

-Hubs grantee staff member



All Hubs grantees and activities were in the Twin Cities metro area

Lessons learned and future momentum

Hubs grantees reflected on their work and the people they serve through two focus groups conducted by Wilder Research during the grant lifecycle (see Methods section for more information). The following section summarizes the successes, challenges, client and family needs, and areas for future momentum identified by program staff at Hubs grantee organizations.

Successes

- **Connecting with new individuals and potential clients.** Through Hubs-funded events and outreach, organizations were able to connect with new individuals outside of their current clients. Community events allowed grantees to talk with people about their needs, steer them in the right direction for assistance, and provide a community for people experiencing similar challenges.
- **Offering services in a dignified way.** A range of Hubs activities – including back-to-school supplies and hair cut events and baby showers – enabled grantees to offer services in a dignified way. According to a grantee staff member, “Hubs events helped people cross off the needed items on their lists,” and maintain connections with attendees after the event.
- **Strengthened partnerships with community organizations.** Through the Hubs program, grantees strengthened connections with other community organizations as grantees worked to connect individuals with the services and supports they needed, also noting that the Hubs program helped to raise their own organization’s visibility among community organizations.
- **Closer collaboration among Hubs grantees.** Grantees also valued the deeper collaboration among themselves. As three Twin Cities-based substance use providers, the Hubs program helped programs collaborate on events (such as the Black History Month programming) and strengthen relationships between providers.
- **Enhanced outreach strategies.** To promote Hubs events, grantees found success by bringing event fliers to different agencies and shelters, calling colleagues at community organizations, and passing out fliers/word of mouth through street outreach. Grantees also utilized their organization’s websites, social media, and a Hubs-specific website.



What women and families need

Through two focus groups, Hubs grantee program staff reflected on the needs of women and families served through the grant. These needs included:



Housing



Mental health services



Affordable child care



Continued access to:

- **Family residential treatment programs**
- **Detox services**
- **Long-term drug management**



Wraparound services

Challenges

- **Contract and reporting requirements.** Hubs grantees experienced challenges with contracting and amendment processes, and determining the appropriate usage and restrictions of the grant. Identifying which activities fell under the Hubs grants and which were Women’s Recovery Services activities – especially given the similarity of both grants’ activities and the way that each grant built upon one another – also made reporting and tracking Hubs activities difficult.
- **Staff recruitment.** Program staff faced obstacles recruiting the staff they needed for Hubs grant activities. In particular, recruiting Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors (LADCs) was challenging. Grantees also found that restrictions related to 245G – Minnesota’s substance use disorder licensed treatment statute – made it hard to staff elements of their treatment programs (such as the number of clients allowed in each group session).
- **Lack of wraparound services, housing, and affordable child care.** Hubs grantees identified a need for more comprehensive services among the women and families they serve. This includes finding stable housing and affordable child care for clients and their family members, which continued to be a challenge for Hubs grantees. Program staff witnessed an increased need for family residential support over the past two years, coupled with a reduction in available programs and supportive housing overall – partially due to the fewer number of family residential treatment centers in Minnesota, 245G restrictions, and licensing issues.

Future momentum

- **Continued collaboration among Hubs grantees and community organizations.** Hubs grantees valued the strengthened partnerships between one another as a result of the grant. Beyond the life of the grant, these organizations are committed to collaborate to better serve parenting women (and their families). Especially as many treatment organizations have closed or changed their scope – shrinking the core group of service providers – the Hubs grantees will continue to share resources and support one another.
- **Additional funding opportunities to meet needs of new individuals served through Hubs.** Hubs grantees hoped for more funding opportunities in the future to support important pieces of their programming, bring more qualified staff to the field, and bolster residential family treatment opportunities.



Looking ahead: Hopes beyond the Hubs grant lifecycle

“I’m hoping that we can continue letting individuals know that we are here. So many agencies have closed or changed their scope. Just letting people know that we’re still here, we’re still in the community, and here’s what we can offer.”

-Hubs grantee staff member

“My hope is that we can continue to not only work together [as Hubs grantees], but that there are other funding opportunities. Even though we’re out there and other substance use disorder programs are out there, there are still people I meet who are like, “What do you guys [Avivo] do? What’s that about?” We are still trying to get the word out and bring more people into the field as well, so that we all can continue doing the work with enough staff.”

-Hubs grantee staff member

Methods & limitations

Methods

Wilder Research partnered with BHD and Hubs grantees to learn about the implementation of the WIC Hubs 1.0 program. Main learning questions for the evaluation included:

- What are Hubs client needs? Are those needs being met through the grant? What else do grantees want to provide to their clients?
- What types and amounts of outreach are grantees providing through the Hubs grant? How many individuals and families are being engaged? How do grantees describe and experience these outreach activities?
- What were the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from Hubs grant implementation? Where is there momentum for future work in Hubs 2.0?

To answer these questions, Wilder Research designed an evaluation that included a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods:

Outreach form: With direct input from grantees, Wilder designed a tracking form to capture information about Hubs-funded activities and events, including the location of the activity or event, how many individuals were served, language services provided at the event, whether or not the event included education or awareness building, and if the event involved recruitment efforts for new clients. Wilder integrated the outreach form into the Women’s Recovery Services database (through Quickbase) and collected information on Hubs-funded activities implemented April 2023–December 2023.

Focus groups: Wilder Research conducted two focus groups with program staff from Hubs grantee organizations. The first focus group was held in April 2023 and focused on definitions of quality of life for individuals in their programs, client needs, how to best collect information on outreach activities funded through the grant, and the feasibility of meeting national standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS). Wilder conducted the second focus group in January 2024, focusing on the successes, lessons learned, and challenges of Hubs 1.0, as well as areas for future momentum.

In addition to the learning questions and methods included above, the broader Hubs grant evaluation included a literature scan and a historical analysis of Women’s Recovery Services data to learn more about the demographics, quality of life, and outcomes achieved by individuals served by Hubs. Information on these components of the evaluation are included in the report, [Women's Recovery Services Data report](#) (pdf file will open).

Limitations

Given the timing of Wilder’s evaluation contract (ending in March 2024), the outreach form data collection ended on January 1, 2024, to allow enough time to analyze and report on the data provided. Similarly, Wilder Research conducted the second focus group in January 2024. Therefore, this report does not capture additional outreach activities hosted by grantees or program staff insights on Hubs work that occurred between January 1, 2024, and March 1, 2024.

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For more information

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