



Life After the Merge: OAC One Year Later

In 2011, after a year-long assessment process, three leading, Ohio organizations—AIDS Resource Center Ohio, Columbus AIDS Task Force, and the Ohio AIDS Coalition—merged.

This alliance creates Ohio's largest AIDS Service Organization (ASO), enabling us to lead in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Ohio through awareness, advocacy and care.

The Ohio AIDS Coalition (OAC), now a division of AIDS Resource Center Ohio (ARC Ohio), has undergone a year of evolution; one that has simultaneously cultivated the development of its role within the larger community, and galvanized the elements that constitute the essence of its identity. OAC has used its merger with ARC Ohio as an opportunity to maximize the efficient use of its resources, integrate its programs, optimize collaborative efforts, and restructure its programming.



OAC Program Numbers

Consumer Education Programs	21
Consumers Reached	300
Provider Education Programs	11
Providers Reached	313 and Webinars
Consumer Leadership Training	10

As a division of ARC Ohio, OAC has maintained its mission and objectives while tailoring the tactics employed and avenues exercised to best accomplish them. Throughout the past year, OAC has synchronously provided programming opportunities throughout the state for Ohioans living with HIV/AIDS as well as health professionals, as illustrated in the table above. In fall 2011, OAC relocated its Columbus office, now collocated with ARC Ohio's Columbus-based offices, while maintaining its Cleveland-based office.



OAC
Ohio AIDS Coalition
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The last several years have brought a changing landscape for the organization as the board of directors continued critical discussions about the sustainability of OAC and as the organization began to shift its focus from client outreach toward community education, engagement and leadership. The leadership of OAC understood the increasing challenges that AIDS Service Organizations are facing in the shifting economic and political climate. As a result, AIDS Resource Center Ohio and OAC announced their intent to merge in August 2011, a decision unanimously supported by organization leadership and the boards of both organizations. Kevin Sullivan, longtime HIV/AIDS activist, advocate, and Executive Director of the Ohio AIDS Coalition, passed away on September 5, 2011; seventeen days before the two organizations officially merged on September 22, 2011.

OAC's programs and services have continued under the umbrella of ARC Ohio, which provides administrative, fiscal, and program support. Kevin believed that this move would strengthen long-term sustainability and enhance services. This decision has safeguarded the continued advocacy and education that OAC provides for Ohio's consumers, and mobilized an even stronger advocacy and public policy voice.



The torch of Director was passed forward to Tyler Andrew TerMeer, former OAC Director of Programming and a long-time friend of Kevin's. Under the new leadership and vision of Tyler, the Ohio AIDS Coalition has recommitted itself to acting as the liaison between people living with HIV/AIDS and accurate, updated information. This effort has been centralized with the launch of OAC's new user-friendly website, an informational nucleus providing community resources and connecting people to services. OAC's commitment to advocacy and empowerment has been strengthened by its relationship to ARC Ohio's Case

Management Network, the agency's clientele, and through recent efforts to diversify its funding streams to support these initiatives.



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The [Public Policy and Advocacy Priorities](#) for the Ohio AIDS Coalition demonstrate OAC's commitment to consumer education, leadership, and empowerment through responsive, proactive, and equitable public policies at the state and national levels. OAC will focus in these four areas: Voter Empowerment and Engagement, The Road to 2014: Healthcare Reform, State Budget and Appropriations, and Emerging Needs.

The MAC AIDS Fund, through the AIDS Foundation of Chicago, supplied OAC with a grant that allows it the opportunity to provide voter forums, provide education about the policy implications for the Affordable Care Act and healthcare reform, as well as to publish [voter empowerment briefs](#) focusing on relevant issues for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Over the next several years, OAC will be busy acting as a guide down the *Road to 2014*, as we monitor and keep Ohio communities informed about implementation of the major reforms of the Affordable Care Act, potential changes in the Ryan White Program, continuing implementation of the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and specifically how the shifting paradigm brought on by these changes impact people living with HIV in Ohio.

In the past year, the Ohio AIDS Coalition has added several new initiatives to its program menu with great success, such as "HIV, Hepatitis C & Co-infection," "HIV & Criminalization," as well as several other [new programs](#) in various partnerships. OAC remains dedicated to its vision of hope, healing, and empowerment while assessing the landscape through the eyes of Ohioans living with HIV/AIDS. This was the impetus for the compilation of a formal report that applies data collected from community members in a state-wide OAC tour between November 30th, 2011 and May 29th, 2012.





This needs assessment report was then included as part of Ohio’s first HIV Strategy meeting, hosted by OAC, which was attended by representatives of different communities and organizations from across the state. This working group aims to continue laboring towards a unified state-wide strategy with the intent of creating a more coordinated response towards ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Ohio communities.

The past year has been a process of enrichment for the Ohio AIDS Coalition, one that is continually unfurling as it refines itself in the interest of better meeting the needs of Ohioans living with HIV/AIDS. OAC’s impact has reached thousands throughout Ohio communities. As OAC continues to evolve advocacy, empowerment, leadership and networking people to care will remain at the forefront as we make strides to serve the needs of people living with and affected by HIV in Ohio.

