Health insurance open enrollment for 2017 started November 1, 2016. Everyone with health insurance that ends December 2016 must take action to secure health coverage for the coming year. People who have an end date after open enrollment (January 31) do not need to take action. People can check their insurance cards to see when their end date is.

ACR Health Director of Insurance Programs, Steve Wood, at right in photo, said many people are worried about increased costs. “Reports on the evening news tell a national story. It’s different in New York State. Our rates are up, but in the 6% to 15% range. And, as rates go up, so do the subsidies that help pay the cost of insurance. You need to call a Navigator to find out what you can expect in 2017.”

ACR Health Navigators, the most highly recommended and experienced professionals in health insurance enrollment in New York State, have served nearly 30,000 individuals since October 2013, from ACR Health offices throughout our nine county service area.

Onondaga County – 475.2430
- Steve Wood, Brian VanBenschoten, Emily Williams, Ethan Johnson, Heather Blum
Oswego County – 956.2467
- Ebony Coleman
Cayuga County – 475.2430
- Nichole Foltz
Jefferson County – 785.8222
- Amber Doner
Lewis County – 785.8222
- Brandy Snyder
Oneida County – 793.0661
- Sarah Sipley, Eric Radley, Ashley Brown
Madison County – 475.2430
- Christiana Rood
Herkimer County – 793.0661
- George Deveny
St. Lawrence County – 785.8222
- Sheryl Evans

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Narcan Cost Threatens Supply – Lives at Risk

ACR Health has trained more than 2,000 community members how to use naloxone (Narcan), the overdose reversal drug that brings people back from a heroin or opioid overdose. Everyone we train walks away with a small blue zip up bag containing two doses of naloxone; knowledge of how to verify that a person is indeed unconscious; and how to dispense the naloxone to reverse the overdose, if needed. The training and the naloxone supply are all free of charge to the public.

These are individuals who have a close friend or family member who uses heroin or other opioids. They want to be prepared to save their life if they overdose - a precarious existence for injection drug users and for those who love them.

ACR Health’s ability to continue its life-saving work with naloxone is compromised now because the cost of naloxone is soaring while its availability is dropping. When our Director of Prevention Services, Erin Bortel, puts in an order for 200 naloxone kits from the New York State Department of Health, we may receive only half of what we asked for and have to wait at least six to eight weeks for delivery. For us, that means a delay in training anxious family members, or a potential delay in replacing the naloxone doses used to reverse an overdose.

Further compounding the short supply is the fact that unexpectedly strong synthetic heroin has hit the streets of Watertown, Utica, and Syracuse. While we hear daily about overdose reversals, we also hear news of overdose deaths because of an unexpectedly potent form of heroin was injected. The standard protocol of two doses off naloxone often isn’t enough to reverse an overdose. Health officials report that at least three or more intranasal doses may be necessary to rescue someone overdosing on enhanced heroin.

Now is a time for drug companies to be part of the solution, but instead they are taking advantage of a desperate situation. They need to increase supply – and keep prices stable. Instead, the cost of naloxone has risen by 2 and a half times in the past three years.

For those who inject drugs, ACR Health wants you to start with a “test” – a smaller dose - to gauge the strength of the substance, and NEVER inject alone.
What you can expect to pay

- Health insurance rates for 2017 are up between 6% - 15% depending on the plan.

- If you do not re-enroll you risk losing your insurance and face a hefty tax penalty for 2017.

- For tax year 2016, the penalty for being uninsured was 2.5% of your total household adjusted gross income, or $695 per adult and $347.50 per child, to a maximum of $2,085.

- For tax year 2017 and beyond, the percentage option will remain at 2.5%, but the flat fee will be adjusted for inflation. (We do not know what this is yet.)

Insurance options

- The Essential Plan, a state low cost /no cost health insurance plan with low co-pays that covers ten categories of “Essential Health Benefits” is ideal for young working families who earn less than $24,000.

- Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and the Essential Plan do not have a specific open enrollment. You can enroll at any time of the year.

- January 31, 2017: Last day to enroll in or change a 2017 health plan. After this date, you can enroll or change plans only if you qualify for a Special Enrollment Period:
  - Lose or change your job
  - Change in income
  - Change in the number of dependents in your family through birth, death, or adoption
  - Divorce, legal separation, or annulment
  - Death of the primary insurance holder in the family
  - Pregnancy

Narcotics Overdose Prevention and Education

ACR Health sponsored three candlelight vigils on the night of October 27 in remembrance of those who died of drug overdoses last year. Many of these accidental deaths were the result of mixing prescription pills with alcohol, heroin, or other drugs. Somber crowds came together in Syracuse, Watertown, and Utica in solidarity with others across the country to raise awareness and open the doors to recovery by eliminating prejudice toward injection drug users. With the removal of shame comes the hope for change. The memory of our children, our relatives, and our friends who have passed will live on in our hearts, be honored and remembered.

- More than 39,000 people died of unintentional drug overdoses in 2014
- Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death. In 2014, there were one and a half more deaths from drug overdose than from auto accidents
- As many as 2.5 million people are treated at hospitals every year for drug related poisoning.
- Every day 2,000 teens use prescription drugs like OxyContin or Vicodin to get high for the first time.
For the past several years, ACR Health has hosted Jesuit Volunteers, individuals who come to share a year with us, working with Director of Volunteer Services, Mary Doody. 2015-2016 Jesuit Volunteer Andrew Lynch has organized us, educated us, taken on every task with a smile and a penchant for finding joy in every project. The following is Andrew’s take on the past year at ACR Health.

What a privilege this has been! A year and a half ago I was finishing graduate school for biomedical engineering. After so much time in a classroom, I was searching for a way to connect with community healthcare. I joined something called the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, a national service program with four values: community, simple living, spirituality, and social justice. Initially I thought this agency I was going to serve with, ACR Health, would only fulfill the “justice” aspect, helping everyone get quality healthcare. But as I end twelve wonderful months here, let me say that ACR Health is the full package.

ACR Health is community. Our staff, volunteers, and clients are as unique as they come: white and people of color; LGBTQ and cis-gendered straight; able-bodied and disabled; living with and without HIV; current, former, and non-drug users. We are multi-faceted, and our diversity makes us relevant. Our diversity lets us connect with newcomers, advocate with passion, speak with authority.

ACR Health is simple living. Healthcare is the “great equalizer.” A medical diagnosis brings a new life perspective swiftly. A broken medical system puts patients in impossible situations (medicine or rent, diapers or food). Through it all, our volunteers and staff help clients prioritize and make it through financial hardship. Programs like Holiday Angel or our emergency food pantry bring the “material” to those who need it, while reminding all that possessions mean less than taking care of each other.

ACR Health is spirituality. Our team comes from many religious or non-religious backgrounds. But we all have faith in tomorrow. We honor those whom AIDS took too soon, and their collective memories encourage us to #endAIDS by 2020. We cry with those losing loved ones to overdoses, and relentlessly promote messages of Safety First and self-worth.

Of course, ACR Health is also social justice. We see the results of structural violence, of criminalizing poverty, of institutional racism. And we open the office every day ready to heal what wounds we can and fight for those on the margins. As a new JV takes over, know that I am forever grateful for the opportunity to work with you. Whether you’re a coworker who shared donuts, a volunteer who controlled a bubble-cannon, or a monthly donor I’ve never met, you make a difference in the lives of this community. You’ve certainly made a difference in mine.

Andrew Lynch

To learn more about joining our volunteer team, visit: ACRHealth.org/volunteer.

Necessary personal care items every family needs cannot be purchased with SNAP funds (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), and many are forced to go without. To fill the gap, ACR Health collects personal care items and shares them with those in need. Will you help? This fall, helping ACR Clients is as simple as picking up a few extra items on your next trip to the supermarket. Providing our clients with basic personal care items and household supplies helps them concentrate on other expenses. This month, we are collecting the following items:

- Toothbrushes • Toothpaste • Bath Soap/Body Wash • Dish Soap • Laundry Soap

All donations are greatly appreciated and will be accepted at all ACR Health offices: Syracuse - 627 West Genesee Street; Utica - 287 Genesee Street, 2nd floor; Watertown - 120 Washington Street, 3rd floor; Auburn - 34 Wright Avenue, Suite 5; Oswego - 10 George Street; and Canton - 101 Main Street, 3rd floor. ACR Health offices are open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Thank you!
The First Frost AIDS Walk/Run, held at Thompson Park Zoo and Conservancy, celebrated 17 years of fundraising for powerful and innovative youth sexual health education programs delivered by ACR Health in the North Country.

ACR Health has expanded services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth to include a Q Center for Northern New York located in Jefferson County that offers drop-in hours, case management services, prevention education, and special events, as well as support groups for LGBTQ youth in Lewis and St. Lawrence counties.

“Our services reflect a growing need, and a commitment to North Country,” said ACR Health Executive Director Wil Murtaugh.

100% of the funds raised at the 17th Annual First Frost AIDS Walk/Run are used to underwrite a wide variety of targeted prevention and sexual health services for youth and for emergency client needs in the North Country.

ACR Health would like to thank our event supporters:

**Jogger Sponsors:** Empower Federal Credit Union, Kinney Drugs Foundation, Noble Health Services, Samaritan Medical Center;

**Walker Sponsors:** Carthage Federal Savings & Loan, Fidelis Care New York, Page Fitness Athletic Club, Sam’s Club; Friend Sponsors: Lowe’s, Student Association of Jefferson Community College, United Healthcare Services, Wal-Mart Watertown; In-Kind Sponsors: Fleet Feet, Panera Bread, Thompson Park Zoo & Conservancy, Saranac, Stewart’s Shops, Starbucks Coffee; **Media Sponsors:** 7 News, 790 WTNY, Fox 28, Magic 103.1, and Border 106.7.

ACR Health and AIC Talent Solutions have had a long working relationship – especially important now as ACR Health has grown significantly in recent months, up to 180 employees. AIC has provided temporary workers who very often become permanent and valued employees like Michelle Glauer. Michelle started as a temp working on special projects before becoming permanent after a few months. “It gave me a chance to try out a company without having to immediately commit. I love it here.”

Building on its relationship with ACR Health, AIC Talent Solutions sponsored the Bubble Blast Run last August at the New York State Fair – in part because it was just good clean fun. “Community involvement is a core principle for ACS Group, parent group for AIC Talent Solutions,” said Marc Cohen, Sr. Director – Global Marketing and Communications. “We signed on as a sponsor for the Bubble Blast Run because it is such a cool event. Anyone can do a race or a run. We wanted to be associated with a high profile and fun event.”

When businesses support businesses, they both grow. Become a sponsor for an ACR event: call 475.2430 or events@ACRHealth.org.
ACR Health has promoted three current Assistant Directors - Jennifer Cook, Jennifer Sullivan Rost, and Steve Wood - to the positions of Director to lead ACR Health’s growing and diversifying services.

Jennifer Cook has been named Director of Support Services. She has a Master of Public Health from the University of Albany School of Public Health. As Director of Support Services, Ms. Cook coordinates and administers overall support services of the agency, supervising 23 support professionals in comprehensive ancillary services which include Ryan White Case Management and Health Education, Housing, Behavioral Health Education, Employment, Nutrition, and DISRIP, a state program to restructure the health care system by reinvesting in the Medicaid program.

“ACR Health is dedicated to opening doors to services that many would otherwise not have access to. With more than 30 years of experience, ACR Health works together as a team to empower every individual we serve to achieve optimal health outcomes. I am very proud to be a part of this team.”

Jennifer Sullivan Rost has been promoted to Director of Care Management. She holds a Master of Social Work from Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service. As Director of Care Management, Ms. Rost provides leadership, direction, and staff development for 37 care managers. She develops care management programs designed to be responsive to the community and the cultural, age, and literacy considerations of the targeted population.

“ACR Health Care Managers help keep our consumers on track with their health appointments and regimens,” said Rost. “This keeps them out of emergency rooms and reduces the overall cost of healthcare.”

Steve Wood has been named Director of Insurance Programs. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from SUNY Empire State College. Steve’s insurance team of 22 staff implements multiple programs that provide insurance for all individuals as well as the Managed Long Term Care Ombudsman Program, Community Health Advocates, Minority Outreach Education and Enrollment Program, and Facilitated Enrollment for Disabled, Aged, and Blind.

“Health care is a right, not a privilege,” said Steve Wood. “Having access to quality health insurance insures that our entire community receives the care that they deserve. I, and the staff of ACR Health Insurance Programs, strive to treat every individual with dignity and respect and to increase the health of the whole community.”

ACR Health has named Frances B. Hradil as Director of Major Gifts. Previously, Ms. Hradil served as a Director of Development at Syracuse University. Her longtime career in fundraising, marketing and event planning includes work in academia, conservation education, health services, and the arts. As the Director of Major Gifts at ACR Health, her primary focus will be to work with individual donors, corporations, and foundations.

“I am delighted to be working alongside dedicated colleagues who are passionate about an organization whose impact on human services is obtained through inclusive access within our communities in a nine county region.”

“We are excited to have Fran Hradil on board,” said ACR Health Executive Director, Wil Murtaugh. “She brings exceptional talent and accomplishment to our agency, and will enhance our capabilities and outreach to those we serve. It is critical that ACR Health cultivate relationships with individuals, corporations, and foundations to help us carry out our mission. Fran will be a tremendous asset to ACR Health.”
Dear Friends,

Sleigh bells, snowflakes, carols, evergreens and holiday cheer...are some of the reasons why we call it “the most wonderful time of the year!”

With the holidays approaching and the season of gift giving upon us, I hope you will consider making an end-of-the-year contribution to ACR Health. Your gift will positively impact our clients by directly supporting the areas of greatest need within the agency.

You will help continue to open the doors for our clients by providing transportation to doctor’s appointments, a warm place to sleep or a meal from the food pantry. Many of our services are not available anywhere else. Our focus on LGBTQ youth services, the Syringe Exchange Program to decrease the spread of infections, and purchasing a bed for someone in need are just a few ways in which you can help us provide every day human necessities in support of their ultimate health.

For your convenience, a return envelope is enclosed. You can also make a donation directly online at www.ACRHealth.org. You can make a gift in honor of someone or in memoriam. Don’t forget—you can double or even triple your gift to ACR Health if the company you work for matches their employees’ charitable giving. Check with your human resources office for more information.

Don’t let this season of joy and giving pass without remembering the mission of ACR Health: Creating healthy communities by opening doors to services that enhance the wellbeing of all.

Your gift will change lives!

Best wishes for the holidays,

Wil Murtaugh
Executive Director

P.S. If your gift is received by December 31st, you will be eligible for a 2016 tax deduction.
ACR Health offers its services to anyone without discrimination based on age, race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, political affiliation, marital status, handicapped status, or mode of transmission.

ACR Health is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Follow us on:

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UPCOMING EVENTS

December 1, 2016 - Thursday
World AIDS Day Remembrance service at 7:30 a.m. at LeMoyne College’s Panasci Chapel. Music provided by the Syracuse Gay & Lesbian Chorus. Reception to follow at 8:00 a.m. Call 475.2430 to find a World AIDS Day event near you.

Now-December 2016 Holiday Angels Join us as we brighten the holiday season for those affected by chronic diseases (including HIV/AIDS) by providing needed items as gifts for ACR Health clients. Call 800.475.2430 for more information.

While supplies last!
Holiday Ornaments Gathering of Hope to share prayers & well wishes around a decorated tree Gift of Hope features a child opening a present $20 per 2016 Set of 2, $12 per single ornament (if shipped), $11 per ornament if picked up

December 8, 2016 - Thursday
Holiday Open House Be our guest at ACR Health Headquarters at 627 West Genesee Street, Syracuse. Meet our new executive director, Wil Murtaugh, and help close out a successful year. 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

February 11, 2017 - Saturday
7th Annual Sled for RED Cardboard Sledding Derby, Tubing, and Food and Drink Sampling at Four Seasons Golf and Ski Resort. Register online: ACRHealth.org or call 800.475.2430.

February 19, 2017 - Sunday
Blowout 2017 FreeForm Fantasy Hair Show at the Landmark Theater in downtown Syracuse; 3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. Professional hair and makeup artists create fantasy hairstyles and send their models strutting across the main stage. To register or for more information: ACRHealth.org or 800.475.2430.

Volunteer Opportunities at Q Centers ACR Health is looking for volunteers to assist with programming at its Q Centers in Syracuse, Utica, and Watertown. Interested persons must complete an application, available at ACR general volunteer orientation, and HIV training. Q Center volunteers undergo reference and background checks. For more information Volunteer@ACRHealth.org or 800.475.2430.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION FORUMS

Forums provide HIV education to community members and those interested in becoming volunteers. Events are held monthly in Syracuse and Utica. Call 800.475.2430 to sign up.

LGBTQ YOUTH SUPPORT GROUPS

ACR Health has numerous programs for LGBTQ youth, including support group meetings in Syracuse, Utica, Watertown, and the Mohawk Valley. Participants are grouped by ages from 8-26.

The Q Center for a full listing

Q Center Syracuse
617 West Genesee Street
Call 315.701.2431 or QCenter@ACRHealth.org

Q Center Mohawk Valley
Call 315.793.0661 ext. 133 or GLBTQYouth@ACRHealth.org

Q Center Northern New York
Call 315.785.8222 ext. 164 or HDavis@ACRHealth.org

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