



# A STEP AHEAD

— CHATTANOOGA —

*BREAKING BARRIERS.  
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES.*



2021  
YEAR IN  
REVIEW

# LETTER FROM MANDY

*DEAR FRIENDS OF A STEP AHEAD CHATTANOOGA,*

Last year was an incredible, and at times, challenging year for A Step Ahead Chattanooga as we navigated momentous growth and organizational change. In 2021, we significantly expanded our educational programming and increased our outreach efforts. As a result, we also saw an increased demand for long-acting reversible contraception. In 2021, we served 27% more clients through our clinic partners than we did in 2020.

By the fall, these activities and the increased demand for services helped us hit some remarkable organizational milestones. Since we were founded in 2014, we have connected over 5,000 women with access to free birth control. In that time, we have also facilitated over 31,000 conversations through our outreach efforts and more than 5,000 people have participated in our educational programming. What incredible achievements and ones that would not have been possible without the support of our community and donors like you. Thank you. While these numbers are significant, what's most important are the people that each one of those numbers represents and the impact that removing barriers to contraception has on their lives.

Here's just one story: At an outreach event in the fall, one of our Health Educators met the mother of an 18-year-old woman who had just started college. The daughter was in a committed relationship but was not ready to have children. She worked at a local restaurant to pay for school and could not afford the extra cost of birth control. Our health educator explained various options to the mother and referred her to one of our clinical partners. The daughter made an appointment and soon received free, long-acting reversible contraception. A few weeks later the mother saw the health educator at another community event and shared how happy she was that her daughter was now in control of her future.

We hear stories like this all the time about the specific and meaningful ways your generosity is changing lives. Not only does this work have an individual impact, but it also has a broader community impact. When women are able to time their pregnancy for if and when it's right for them, it allows them to pursue their goals. That leads to outcomes like a highly educated workforce, increased incomes, reduced healthcare costs, happier and healthier families, economic stability...the list really goes on and on. When you invest in our mission, you are not only investing in the women we serve directly, you are also helping build stronger communities.



Thank you for helping us remove barriers to contraception through education, outreach, and access to free birth control. We truly could not do this work without you and look forward to continuing to serve as a critical resource for our community.

*SINCERELY,*

*Mandy Cowley*



**A STEP AHEAD**  
— CHATTANOOGA —

## ***VISION***

A Step Ahead Chattanooga envisions a world where women become pregnant on their terms, enabling them, their families, and communities to thrive.

## ***MISSION***

Our mission is to remove barriers to contraception through education, outreach, and access to free birth control.

## ***VALUES***

- › Everyone has a right to knowledge about how their bodies work.
- › When individuals have access to accurate information and access to contraception, they are better equipped to make decisions right for them and their families.
- › Health services should be provided free of judgment in a caring, respectful, and safe manner.
- › Every individual should be able to select the birth control method that is best for them.

## CLIENT DATA

A report from the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) confirms what we have known from the earliest days of A Step Ahead Chattanooga: That access to effective contraception increases women's educational attainment and labor force participation, improves their career outcomes, increases their earnings and reduces poverty - indicators which are also correlated with better health outcomes for both individuals and families.

Nearly half (45%) of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended, and unintended pregnancy occurs most frequently for those living below the poverty line. While less than one percent of women will experience a pregnancy while using an implant or IUD, many women cite barriers such as cost, access to services, and knowledge of their options.

ASAC provides a crucial service, making contraceptive more accessible and helping individuals understand the full range of contraceptive methods so they can choose the contraceptive method that is right for them.

SINCE 2014...



1 OUT OF 6  
CLIENTS WERE NOT  
USING ANY BIRTH  
CONTROL PRIOR TO  
CONTACTING ASAC.

46%

OF CLIENTS  
ARE COMPLETELY  
UNINSURED



1/3 OF CLIENTS  
WERE STUDENTS  
AT THE TIME  
THEY RECEIVED  
SERVICES.

## THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is a measurement of the minimum amount of annual income that is needed for individuals and families to pay for essentials, such as room and board, clothes, and transportation. The FPL takes into account the number of people in a household, their income, and the state in which they live. The rates are updated yearly by the US Census Bureau and distributed by the Health and Human Services Department.

For example, in 2021 the FPL for a family of 3 was \$21,960. So, a family of 3 making less than \$54,900 would fall in the <250% of FPL category.

84%

OF CLIENTS FELL  
UNDER 250% FPL



## *TN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES*

Late in 2020, A Step Ahead Chattanooga received a two-year grant through the Department of Human Services for a project called the “Plan Ahead Program”. This grant has allowed us to expand our outreach and education efforts throughout our Tennessee counties with a particular focus on the rural areas of our service region. As a result, we have been able to hire three full-time health educators and a program manager to oversee the educational aspects of our work. By pairing this funding with funding from The Elsa and Peter Soderberg Foundation, we were also able to hire two part-time bilingual health educators. The addition of these staff members and their expertise has allowed A Step Ahead Chattanooga to build more meaningful partnerships with referral agencies, expand our educational programming, more effectively serve the Spanish-speaking community, and build relationships throughout our service region that will make our services more accessible.

In the first year of the project, we reached over 7,000 people through our education and outreach efforts. We also established 182 new referral partners. In the second year of the grant, we are focusing on refining our educational programming and strengthening the partnerships we established in the first year. We are so grateful to the state of Tennessee and the Department of Human Services for helping us expand our capacity which in turn helps remove barriers to contraception and reach our community in an entirely new way.

## 2021 REACH SYMPOSIUM

In February of 2021, A Step Ahead Chattanooga brought back our semi-annual reproductive healthcare symposium with a new theme, a new name, and a new format. The Regional LARC Symposium of the past became the REACH Symposium: A free virtual symposium on Reproductive Equality, Access, and Contraceptive Healthcare. Though shifting to a virtual platform had its challenges, the new symposium format was just as successful as our previous in-person events with presentations by expert speakers from across the country. The REACH Symposium was sponsored by the Weldon F. Osborne Foundation and in partnership with The UTC School of Nursing.

Topics presented by our expert speakers included “Introducing Reproductive Equality into Your Practice”, “Patient-centered Counseling”, “CDC Planning Guidelines” and more.

*WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE CONTINUED  
EVOLUTION OF OUR SYMPOSIUM IN 2023!*



join us!

# R.E.A.C.H.

A FREE VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM  
ABOUT REPRODUCTIVE EQUALITY,  
ACCESS TO BIRTH CONTROL, AND  
CONTRACEPTIVE HEALTHCARE

**February 19, 2021**

10:00 am-3:00 pm



## *INDEPENDENT EVALUATION UPDATE*

In 2019 a nonprofit research organization known as the Research Triangle Institute (RTI International), conducted an independent evaluation of our program. The results from that initial evaluation helped us measure our impact to date, increased our understanding of our prospective clients, and gave us next steps for building on our strengths so we could continue to effectively remove barriers to contraception. Given the growth of our organization over the past couple of years, both geographically and in programming, and the continued social and economic impact of the pandemic, we recently invited RTI back to update their evaluation. In the fall of 2021, RTI conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, gathering stories to demonstrate the success of the new Plan Ahead Program and collecting feedback on challenges and opportunities for growth.

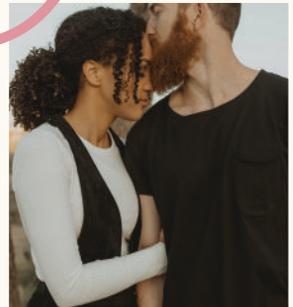
While their complete report will not be available until later in 2022, here are some of the key findings from their interim report:

- › Clinical partners have seen an increase in demand for long-acting reversible contraception among the populations they serve. Demand has remained consistently high for postpartum patients.

*(cont. on page 7)*

- › Community partners reported that their client population was unfamiliar with the breadth of birth control options and have shown interest in switching to a LARC method. Community partners also reported that their population's knowledge of birth control was limited to condoms, birth control pills, and the shot prior to their relationship with ASAC.
- › Clinical partners reported that younger patients are becoming more familiar with LARCs. Stakeholders referenced the influx of social media, pharmaceutical ads, and experiences of friends as an educational source for young patients interested in LARCs. However, multiple clinical partners simultaneously believed their greatest challenge to increasing LARC uptake is their patient's knowledge deficit.
- › Knowledge of birth control methods varies based on a client's background. For example, partners found that young women in high school or college and immigrant populations are less familiar with the breadth of birth control options available.

We look forward to getting the complete report from RTI later this year and will use their findings not only to demonstrate our success, but also to work to improve our programming to continue to meet the needs of prospective clients as the barriers people face in accessing the contraceptive method that is right for them continues to shift.



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# ConnectHER

APRIL 28  
2022

5-7  
PM

MILLER PLAZA

WE ARE SO PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT AS OF 2021, ASAC HAS CONNECTED OVER 5,000 WOMEN WITH ACCESS TO FREE BIRTH CONTROL AND PROVIDED EDUCATION TO TENS OF THOUSANDS MORE. OUR MILESTONE CELEBRATION HONORS THE INDIVIDUALS WE SERVE, OUR SUPPORTERS, AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

CONNECTHER WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND STYLED AS A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION WITH ART, ENTERTAINMENT, FOOD, DRINKS, AND A SILENT AUCTION ON **APRIL 28, 2022**, IN MILLER PLAZA/WATERHOUSE PAVILION.

WE WANT TO INVITE OUR SUPPORTERS AND COMMUNITY TO JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THIS IMPORTANT MILESTONE AND HEAR MORE ABOUT OUR PLANS TO REACH EVEN MORE WOMEN IN MORE COUNTIES!

REGISTER FOR FREE:  
[T.LY/ASACCONNECTHER](https://t.ly/asacconnecther)

PRESENTED BY





**A STEP AHEAD**  
— CHATTANOOGA —

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