



# The Adherence and Community Engagement (ACE) Team

An Inner City Outreach Team Improving Adherence and Linkage to Care for  
High Barrier Individuals Who Live with HIV

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**29<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Conference on  
HIV / AIDS Research**

**29<sup>e</sup> Congr s annuel canadien de recherche  
sur le VIH/sida**

## **Conflict of Interest Disclosure:**

I have no conflicts of interest.



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The ACE Team was founded in 2016 by Mint Health + Drugs to support Edmonton’s marginalized people living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in accessing care and adhering to antiretroviral therapy (ART).

The ACE Team utilizes pharmacists, a licensed practical nurse and outreach worker to provide outreach 7 days a week to a caseload of 38 HIV positive patients. They outreach to shelters, clients’ homes, or the street to provide medications, health and social interventions.

ACE works to secure housing, food access, funding supports and manage acute health concerns, chronic diseases, optimize or initiate therapy, and connect individuals to care.

**Table 7.** Demographics on all accepted referrals to the ACE Program

Variable	Accepted Referrals (n=113)
<i>Demographics</i>	
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	58 (51%)
Female	54 (48%)
Transgender	1 (1%)
<b>Age</b>	
18-25	7 (6%)
26-35	25 (22%)
36-64	78 (69%)
65+	3 (3%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Indigenous	84 (72%)
Caucasian	24 (21%)
Black	3 (3%)
Asian	1 (1%)
<b>Mental Illness</b>	82 (73%)
<b>HIV Positive</b>	103 (91%)
<b>AIDS Related Illnesses</b>	52 (46%)
<b>Terminal Illness</b>	3 (3%)
<b>Problematic Alcohol Use</b>	58 (51%)
<b>Illicit Drug Use</b>	106 (94%)
<b>Injection Drug Use (IVDU)</b>	
Active IVDU	63 (56%)
History of IVDU	82 (70%)
<b>Sex Trade Work</b>	
Active in the sex trade	15 (13%)
History of sex trade work	34 (30%)



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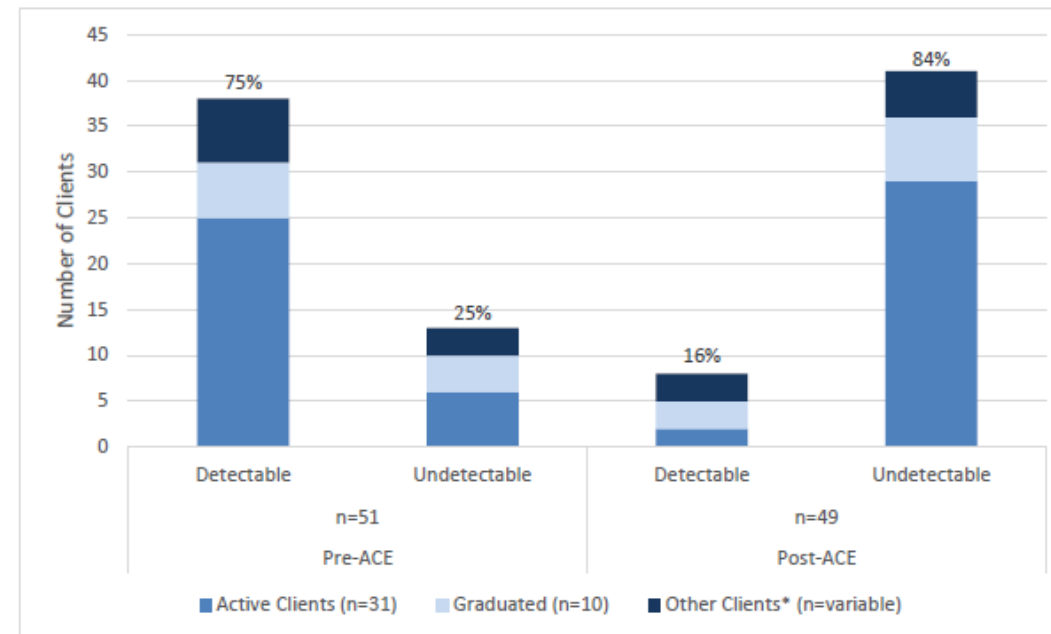
TABLE 11: Adherence rates for clients restarting or continuing ART pre- and post-ACE intervention (n=43)

Adherence rate (%)	Pre-ACE	Post-ACE
0-5	20	0
5-10	11	0
10-15	3	0
15-20	4	0
20-30	3	0
30-60	2	0
60-70	0	0
70-75	0	2
75-80	0	3
80-85	0	3
85-90	0	3
90-95	0	10
95-100	0	22

### ACE improves antiretroviral medication adherence.

- ACE provides daily observed therapy of prescribed medications and ART.
- ACE utilizes a harm reduction and trauma informed approach to care.

FIGURE 3: HIV viral load suppression pre- and post-ACE intervention



### ACE improves viral suppression in a high risk, high barrier population.

All referrals to ACE have failed alternative services and adherence support strategies, they are considered lost to care.

- 61% experience homelessness.
- 12% are recalcitrant.
- majority are on salvage antiretroviral therapy.



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The ACE Team utilized Alberta Netcare to track the number of emergency room (ER) visits and hospitalizations on 41 clients who remained in the program for 6 months or more between August 2016 – April 2019.

The ACE Team reduced overall hospitalizations by 58%, and ER visits by 26%, both key drivers of increased healthcare costs.

ACE intervention also demonstrated a decrease in average days hospitalized for ACE clients:

- Average of **29 day** hospital stay **Pre-ACE**.
- Average **9 days** hospital stay **Post-ACE**.
- **69% decrease** in days hospitalized.

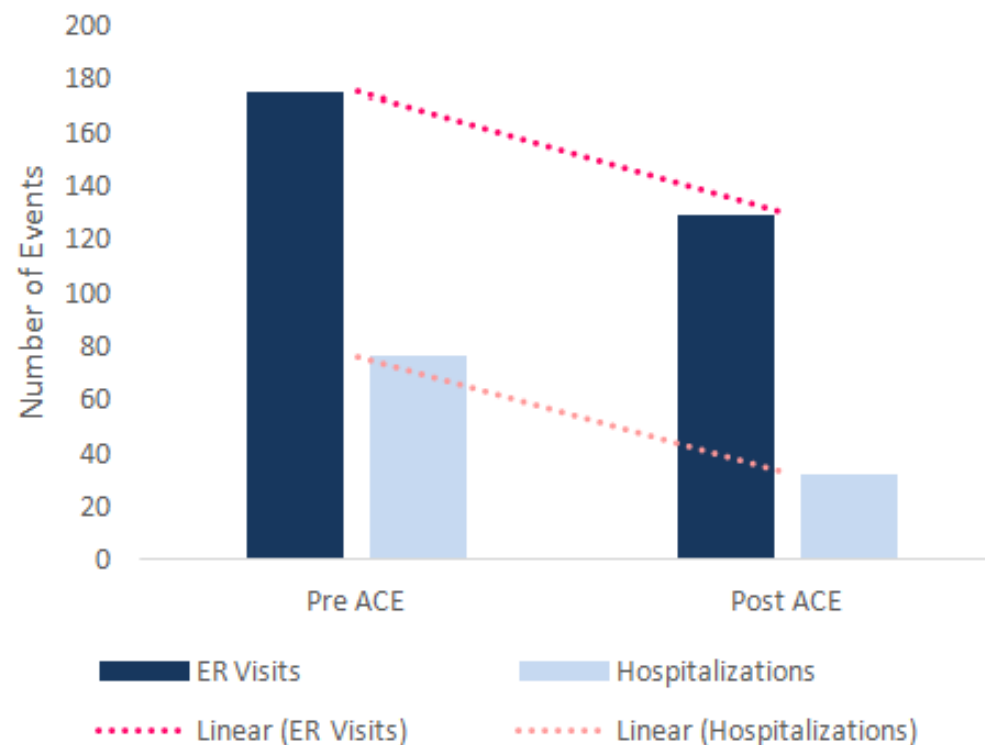


Figure 6. ACE Reduces Emergency Room Visits and Hospitalizations