

## **Partnership Connects Traumatic Brain Injury Survivors to Resources**

### **Issue:**

In South Carolina, 61,000 residents live with permanent disability due to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) after being discharged from hospitals. TBI related disabilities include physical, cognitive, and behavioral limitations. To illustrate the magnitude of TBI disability in South Carolina each year, approximately 3,000 people with new TBI are hospitalized and discharged from hospitals and 12,000 people with new TBI are treated and released from Emergency Departments (ED).

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Division of Injury and Violence Prevention (DHEC DIVP) and the South Carolina Brain Injury Leadership Council (SCBILC) conducted a survey to determine if people diagnosed with TBI and their families were aware of TBI general information and the available services appropriate to their needs. As a result of the survey 46 percent responded that they had not been given TBI information and only 26 percent responded that they had been given TBI information when discharged from the hospital. These findings indicate that people diagnosed with TBI and family members are not connected to needed services following their initial discharge.

### **Intervention:**

DHEC DIVP and Brain Injury Alliance of South Carolina (BIASC) have partnered to connect TBI survivors, health professionals, and community resources through a TBI service linkage initiative. The primary goal of this initiative is to link TBI survivors and their families to TBI information and appropriate services. DHEC DIVP is connecting survivors and their families to BIASC, who provides TBI prevention, research, education, support, and advocacy in the community. The TBI service linkage initiative, which is funded in Part D of the Public Health Injury Surveillance Prevention Program grant provided by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), used the following awareness strategies:

- Created TBI, concussion, and blast injury tip cards consisting of signs and symptoms descriptions and DHEC DIVP and BIASC contact information. 52,000 tip cards are displayed in health departments, physicians' offices, and community health fairs;
- Designed custom printed bags displaying DHEC DIVP and BIASC contact information. Bags are filled with information on TBI, rehabilitation facilities, and local hotels and restaurants. They also contain personal hygiene items, tip cards, and snack items. The bags are delivered by BIASC's TBI Support Groups to hospitalized TBI survivors and their families;
- Developed individual relationships with case managers in the hospital and insurance systems by providing TBI awareness information and continuing education units for training; and
- Produced a TBI public service announcement that will be aired on 25 radio stations during prime time throughout the state.

### **Impact:**

As a result of this TBI service linkage initiative, the DHEC DIVP and BIASC partnership developed a statewide strategic plan to prevent TBI. The plan will be used as a roadmap for future interventions and partnerships. By implementing TBI awareness strategies DHEC DIVP and BIASC have:

- Improved collaboration between TBI survivors, health professionals, and community resources by working together on TBI related issues;
- Assisted case managers in hospital and insurance settings by providing TBI information and resources for their referral process;
- Increased usage of the 1-877-TBI-FACT telephone resource; and
- Increased DHEC DIVP and BIASC website hits by more than 50 percent.

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