

The Poverty Forum: Health Care

Additional Funding for AIDS Testing and Treatment

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Area: Health Care

Issue:

Low-income communities, especially African-American communities, continue to experience high levels of HIV infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Blacks in the United States have an infection rate seven times as high as whites with infection rates doubling between 1995 and 2005. Latinos in the United States have an infection rate three times as high as whites. Currently, half of people infected with HIV who should be receiving HIV drugs do not receive the drugs. Current federal programs provide vital support to states and localities trying to help detect and treat low-income persons with the disease, but federal funding needs to be expanded to meet the need.

Problem:

The AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) is authorized by Title II of the Ryan White Act. As of 2008, the federal appropriation of \$808 million supported the states in their purchase of drugs for over 100,000 persons living with HIV/AIDS.

However, ADAP faces a chronic funding shortfall, and many people who could be taking life-saving medications are on ADAP waiting lists. Moreover, as new, more costly -- but also more effective -- drug regimens come on-line in the near future, costs will increase. It is estimated that additional funding of \$175-\$200 million per year is needed to fully fund the program and eliminate waiting lists.

In addition, the Ryan White Act also provides funding for enhanced HIV testing through an early diagnosis grant program. Nonetheless, it is estimated that 250,000 number of people are still living with HIV but do not know it because they have never been tested.

Policy Recommendation:

Increase funding for ADAP by \$175 million in 2010 and beyond.

Increase funding for the Ryan White early diagnosis grant program from \$30 million to \$50 million in 2010 and beyond. Funds should be as accessible to states as possible.

Political Outlook:

The current Ryan White law expires September 30, 2009, so these changes could be pursued in the reauthorization process this year as well as through the annual appropriations process.

References for more Information:

- www.kff.org/hiv/aids
- Center for Disease Control, HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, Vol. 18, 2008
- Aids.gov