

# HRSA Studies Ryan White Reauthorization

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Given the cost of new and emerging treatment protocols and the changing demographics of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the future effectiveness of much federally funded HIV/AIDS service provision will be greatly influenced by how the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act is reauthorized. That is the position of the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) HIV/AIDS Bureau, which has mobilized its staff for a thorough review of existing efforts and the needs of targeted populations to sharpen the national discussion of key access, financing, therapeutic, and outcome measurement issues. Authorization of the appropriations for the Ryan White Act expires in fiscal year 2000.

As a first step, the Bureau surveyed its AIDS program staff to gain their perspectives on reauthorization. The Bureau also had collected information from national, State and local groups regarding the effectiveness of CARE Act programs in meeting the needs of targeted populations. The Bureau then established "reauthorization teams," internal committees charged with taking information from both internal and external sources and reviewing it in the context of the Bureau's four program priorities: access to care for underserved populations, assisting CARE Act programs in responding to a dynamic health care financing system, assuring access to appropriate HIV therapies, and demonstrating the impact of CARE Act programs through the development of effective outcome measures. These teams developed a "consensus document" that outlines key issues under the four priorities, and the legislative implications of each. This document has been forwarded to the Secretary's office for consideration, and eventual incorporation into recommendations that will be used by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in its discussions with Congress.

Some of the issues outlined in the consensus document include:

## Access to care

- How can the CARE Act help insure access to quality care and services for vulnerable populations?
- How can the CARE Act be structured to respond to a dynamic health care delivery system in which the financing of health services is increasingly characterized by managed care?
- How well do publicly-funded programs serve the health care needs of underserved populations and how does the Ryan White program fit into that funding environment?

- What is the interaction between the CARE Act and other public health programs?
- How will changes to traditional safety net programs impact the demand for CARE Act services?

## Quality assurance considerations

- What is the capacity of CARE Act providers to respond to changes in the epidemic, evolving client needs, and changes in health care financing?
- How can Ryan White programs best demonstrate their impact so that they continue to receive Congressional support?

## Administrative considerations

- What needs to be addressed legislatively to support CARE Act grantees in responding to changes in the epidemic and shifts in health care financing?
- What changes need to be made to support CARE Act planning bodies in responding to evolving client needs and changes in the epidemic

Other activities related to reauthorization have included two meetings of the HRSA HIV/AIDS Advisory Committee, one in San Antonio, Texas, and one in Washington, DC. During the meetings the group heard public testimony regarding the CARE Act's role in addressing issues such as quality of HIV care, disparities in access to care and services, ADAP funding and access issues, service coordination and CARE Act planning and administration. Information from those meetings will be used by the Advisory Committee to formulate its recommendations to the Secretary on Ryan White reauthorization.

In addition, the Bureau is developing policy papers on key issues for the populations served, as well as general structure and function of CARE Act programs. These policy papers should be available for review and discussion by late summer.

For a copy of the Ryan White CARE Act Fact Sheet, please browse the HHS Website at: <http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/1998pres/981218d.htm> or call the HRSA Press Office at 301-443-3377. ❖

