



HIV and Viral Hepatitis Policy Watch

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The *HIV and Viral Hepatitis Policy Watch* provides timely updates and resources on Hill and Administration activities impacting HIV and viral hepatitis programs. Please go to NASTAD's website at www.NASTAD.org for more information.

SPECIAL ISSUE VIRAL HEPATITIS LAY OF THE LAND: UPDATES AND THE WAY FORWARD

The goal of the NASTAD Viral Hepatitis Program is to increase the capacity of health department hepatitis and HIV/AIDS programs to effectively deliver prevention and care and to incorporate viral hepatitis into existing programs and policies. The Viral Hepatitis Program has three components – technical assistance (TA), public policy, and coalition building.

Even before formally incorporating viral hepatitis into the mission and vision of the organization in 2010, NASTAD has been a long standing advocate for viral hepatitis prevention and care. From the release of [Viral Hepatitis and HIV/AIDS Integration: A Resource Guide](#), facilitating the Hepatitis Appropriations Partnership, holding TA meetings, updating the viral hepatitis policy primer [Raising the Profile, Raising Your Voice](#), the release of the [Viral Hepatitis Advocacy Toolkit](#), and emphasizing viral hepatitis in the organization's Strategic Map, NASTAD has continually ensured that viral hepatitis advocates and health departments have a role in shaping public policy and public health. For a timeline of major viral hepatitis activities since 2010, please [click here](#).

Recent Meetings

National Viral Hepatitis Technical Assistance Meeting

On October 17-20, 2011, NASTAD convened its second National Viral Hepatitis Technical Assistance Meeting for Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinators (AVHPC) from state health departments with hepatitis advocates, community leaders, representatives from federal government and the pharmaceutical and diagnostics industries. Participants shared TA through a peer-to-peer approach and received updates from federal agencies, national, state and local experts and developed new partnerships for moving forward. NASTAD partnered with the [National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable](#) (NVHR) and coordinated the TA meeting with their membership meeting. The meetings provided valuable time for health department staff, community advocates, persons living with viral hepatitis and federal and industry partners to discuss common goals, network and return home re-energized.

As part of an organized “Hill Day,” meeting participants visited key Members of Congress with jurisdiction over viral hepatitis programs and advocated for increased support of viral hepatitis prevention and care programs. Top-line recommendations included a \$40 million increase to viral hepatitis programs at CDC’s Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) and protection and expansion of the AVHPC program by doubling the funds from \$5 million to \$10 million. As previously reported, DVH received an increase of \$10 million from the Prevention and Public Health Fund by the Senate Labor-Health and Human Services (L-HHS) Appropriations Subcommittee. As a final request, participants also asked for full funding for the implementation of the [Viral Hepatitis Action Plan](#) released by the Department of Health and

Human Services (HHS) earlier this year. Presentations and materials from this meeting can be found [here](#).

Administration

Action Plan for the Prevention, Care, and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis

On May 12, 2011, as a response to the [Institute of Medicine Report on Hepatitis and Liver Cancer](#), HHS released an [Action Plan for the Prevention, Care, and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis](#). After nearly a decade of calling for HHS to develop such a plan, along with many other viral hepatitis advocates, NASTAD [commended](#) Secretary Sebelius for taking the tremendous steps toward its creation. For more information and updates on the implementation of the Viral Hepatitis Action Plan, please read Dr. Ron Valdiserri's [AIDS.gov blog post](#).

Congress

Adult Viral Hepatitis Program Coordinators (AVHPCs)

On November 4, 2011, led by Representative Hank Johnson (D-GA), Representatives Sanford Bishop (D-GA), Judy Chu (D-CA), John Conyers (D-MI), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Mike Honda (D-CA), Barbara Lee (D-CA), John Lewis (D-GA), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Jackie Speier (D-CA), and Ed Towns (D-NY) sent a [letter](#) to Dr. John Ward, Director of the CDC Division of Viral Hepatitis, expressing their support for maintaining the current structure of the AVHPC program.

The Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee included [report language](#) for S. 1599 ([L-HHS FY12 Appropriations Act](#)) that recognized the Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinators and stated that the "[Coordinator Program] is the only Federal hepatitis prevention program operating in all States and understands that the program does not include any dedicated funding for direct services. Further Committee encourages the Division of Viral Hepatitis to maintain this program in all previously funded jurisdictions to build the Federal response for both low- and high-impacted areas."

In an effort to ensure the continuation of these programs in all jurisdictions, NASTAD also sent a [letter](#) to Dr. Ward, [as did NVHR](#), urging CDC to continue to fund AVHPCs in every state in addition to creating ten (10) nationwide Centers of Excellence.

Viral Hepatitis Testing Act of 2011 ([H.R. 3381](#) / [S. 1809](#))

On November 3, 2011, Representatives Mike Honda (D-CA), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Brian Bilbray (R-CA), Charlie Dent (R-PA) and Hank Johnson (D-GA) joined Senator John Kerry (D-MA), in introducing bipartisan, bicameral legislation to combat viral hepatitis nationwide. The [Senate](#) and [House](#) Viral Hepatitis Testing Acts of 2011 require testing programs around the nation to increase the number of individuals who are aware of their infection with a focus on vulnerable, minority populations and require the development and distribution of public information about viral hepatitis detection and control of infections. The bills also call for better coordination of medical treatment, counseling and improvement of the education, training, and skills of health professionals in the detection and control of viral hepatitis.

Looking Ahead

NASTAD intends to continue its long-standing role as an advocate for viral hepatitis and provide support and TA to health department programs. NASTAD will also continue to assert the role of Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinators and align AVHPCs with key stakeholders (e.g., industry, government, research, and other areas), particularly in the implementation of the Viral Hepatitis Action Plan.

