



Monday, April 4, 2011

The Honorable Howard Koh  
Assistant Secretary for Health  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 716-G  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Koh,

On behalf of the over 90 undersigned organizations, we are writing to provide our recommendations on the rollout and implementation of the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) *Action Plan on Viral Hepatitis*. We ask that HHS strategically prioritize the *Action Plan* to achieve the following overarching community goals:

- Increase the resources dedicated to viral hepatitis, particularly to CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis (DVH) and to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) to build capacity for the plan's implementation.
- Charge the heads of relevant HHS agencies to develop operational plans to meet the plan's goals and objectives. While this is an HHS-wide plan, we encourage the implementation to include collaboration with the Department of Justice's Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) hepatitis C program.
- Ensure ongoing community engagement with the HHS interagency working group on viral hepatitis and the OASH on the implementation of the action plan.
- Execute high-level public engagement activities around the plan's release and implementation.

#### **Rollout of the HHS Action Plan on Viral Hepatitis**

We ask that HHS work with the following stakeholders upon the release of the plan in the following ways.

#### **Community Engagement**

- Convene an external stakeholder call prior to the release to allow for community preparation and rollout, preferably at the end of April, and schedule regular stakeholder calls after its release.
- Coordinate with the following community activities to maximize the plan's dissemination with federal stakeholders:
  - Congressional briefing organized by Senator John Kerry (D-MA) and Representative Mike Honda (D-CA) around the release of the plan in May.
  - The National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR) is organizing a national hepatitis rally in May.
  - We are working with the Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP) to secure a Presidential Proclamation and White House Event for National Viral Hepatitis Awareness Month in May and World Hepatitis Day on July 28, 2011.
- We strongly recommend the formation of a community advisory body or council to ensure ongoing engagement with the interagency work group. Community partners must include state and local

health departments, especially the Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Coordinators and the Perinatal Hepatitis B Coordinators, community based organizations, national advocacy organizations, medical and clinical provider organizations, patients and the private sector including pharmaceutical, medical device and diagnostic manufacturers.

### **Administration Engagement**

- We encourage you to brief relevant bodies of the Executive Office of the President, particularly the Domestic Policy Council such as the Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP), and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA), the Office of Public Engagement, and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- Within HHS, we encourage you to brief the CDC/HRSA Advisory Committee (CHAC) on HIV and STD Prevention and Treatment, CDC Foundation's Viral Hepatitis Action Coalition (VHAC) and high-level staff and heads of all agencies:
  - The Office of the Surgeon General, CDC, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Office of Health Reform (OHR and OCCIO), Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (HIT), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

### **Congressional Engagement**

- We encourage you to brief Congressional Members and/or their staff, particularly staff who have HHS in their profile as this is an HHS-wide plan.
- Members who oversee appropriations and authorizations that impact viral hepatitis must be briefed, specifically the House and Senate Subcommittees on Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. Committee leadership and their staff must be made aware of the plan.
- The Congressional Tri-Caucus and its leadership must be briefed.

### **Public Engagement**

- We encourage you to use the release of the plan to bring much-needed political and public attention to viral hepatitis. As such, we request that you hold a timely public event once released or issue a video message with Secretary Kathleen Sebelius highlighting the plan. Ideally we would like a forum broadcasted on the White House's website and C-SPAN, in addition to the plan's launch highlighted on the White House's website.
- To continue to build off the momentum, we request that you engage in talks with the White House about an event and Presidential Proclamation for World Hepatitis Day and National Viral Hepatitis Awareness Month in May, and hold a hepatitis testing event for White House leadership and staff. Further, the President can host a reception for all stakeholders.

### **Implementation of the *HHS Action Plan on Viral Hepatitis***

We ask that HHS work on the implementation of the plan in the following ways.

### **Prioritization of Resources**

- Increase funding for viral hepatitis and allocate resources based on the fiscal priorities and activities established in the Division of Viral Hepatitis professional judgment (PJ) budget. While we recognize that viral hepatitis and many other public health initiatives are in jeopardy of losing Congressional funding, we encourage you to leverage funding through the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Prevention and Public Health Fund and through integration and eligibility of viral hepatitis into other health reform initiatives.
- Further, we request that relevant systems and policy change associated with hepatitis prevention be an option for grantees under the Community Transformation Grants.

- We also ask that you identify existing HHS resources to support this scantily-funded program through reprogramming efforts, program collaboration and service integration (PCSI) efforts and grant announcements. We hope that from these efforts, the unmet fiscal needs identified in the PJ and key elements of both the plan and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report on viral hepatitis will finally become a reality.

#### **Cross-Agency Partnership and Collaboration**

- The plan must work with other overlapping strategies and plans within the Department to avoid missed opportunities and duplicative efforts, and maximize cross-agency partnerships and collaboration.
- The plan must identify opportunities for collaboration with health reform initiatives including the National Prevention and Health Promotion Strategy overseen by the Surgeon General, other national initiatives such as the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, and internal initiatives such as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Strategic Plan. Agency work plans must incorporate the viral hepatitis plan and identify specific opportunities for cross-agency collaboration and communication.

We thank you and your staff for your continued leadership in convening the interagency working group on viral hepatitis and engaging with non-government stakeholders on the development and implementation of this national plan. The viral hepatitis community welcomes the opportunity to work with you and your staff on this important issue.

cc: Jeff Crowley, ONAP  
Ron Valdiserri, HHS OASH  
Kevin Fenton, CDC NCHHSTP  
John Ward, CDC DVH  
Rosie Henson, HHS OASH  
Tara Broido, HHS OASH  
Greg Millett, CDC Washington  
Amy Pulver, CDC NCHHSTP

Sincerely,

AIDS Action Baltimore  
Baltimore, MD

AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts  
Boston, MA

AIDS Foundation of Chicago  
Chicago, IL

AIDS United  
Washington, DC

ALERT Health, Inc.  
North Miami, FL

The American Academy of HIV Medicine  
Washington, DC

American Association of Occupational Health Nurses  
Pensacola, FL

American Liver Foundation  
New York, NY

Asian Center - Southeast Michigan  
Southfield, MI

Asian Health Coalition  
Chicago, IL

Asian Health Foundation  
New Brunswick, NJ

Asian Liver Center at Stanford University  
Palo Alto, CA

Asian Pacific Community in Action  
Phoenix, AZ

Asian Pacific Health Foundation  
San Diego, CA

Asian Pacific Liver Center at St. Vincent Medical Center  
Los Angeles, CA

AsianWeek Foundation  
San Francisco, CA

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum  
Washington, DC

Asian & Pacific Islander Wellness Center  
San Francisco, CA

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)  
Oakland, CA

Aspirations  
Baton Rouge, LA

B Free CEED Coalition  
New York, NY

Bailey House, Inc  
New York, NY

California Hepatitis Alliance  
Sacramento, CA

Cascade AIDS Project  
Portland, OR

Caring Ambassadors Program, Inc.  
Oregon City, OR

Center for Health Improvement  
Sacramento, CA

CitiWide Harm Reduction  
Bronx, NY

Coalition On Positive Health Empowerment. (COPE)  
New York, NY

Community Access National Network  
Washington, DC

Community Health Action of Staten Island  
Staten Island, NY

Corporate Hepatitis Alliance  
Bethlehem, PA

Digestive Disease National Coalition  
Washington, DC

Georgia AIDS Coalition  
Snellville, GA

The Greater Washington Viral Hepatitis Support Group  
Silver Spring, MD

Harlem United Community AIDS Center  
New York, NY

Harm Reduction Coalition  
New York, NY

HealthHIV  
Washington, DC

hepCmeditation project  
San Francisco, CA

hepCmeditation project  
Seattle, WA

Hep C Connection  
Denver, CO

Hep Help of New Jersey Alliance, Inc.  
Lanoka Harbor, NJ

Hepatitis Appropriations Partnership (HAP)  
Washington, DC

Hepatitis B Foundation  
Doylestown, PA

Hepatitis B Initiative of  
Washington, DC

Hepatitis C Association  
Scotch Plain, NJ

The Hepatitis C Mentor and Support Group, Inc.  
New York, NY

H.E.A.L.S of the South, (Hepatitis Education Awareness and Liver Support)  
Tallahassee, FL

Hepatitis Education Project  
Seattle, WA

Hepatitis Foundation International  
Silver Spring, MD

Hepatitis Outbreaks' National Organization for Reform (HONORreform)  
Fremont, NE

HIVictorious, Inc.  
Madison, WI

HIV Prevention Justice Alliance  
Cranston, RI

Housing Works  
Washington, DC

International Community Health Services  
Seattle, WA

The International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care  
Washington, DC

LiverHope  
Minnetonka, MN

Local Area Support For Hepatitis, Inc. (LASH)  
Redding, CA

Los Angeles County Hepatitis B Coalition  
Los Angeles, CA

Maryland Hepatitis Coalition  
Baltimore, MD

Michigan Hepatitis C Foundation  
Grand Rapids, MI

Midwest Asian Health Association (MAHA)  
Chicago, IL

Missouri Hepatitis C Alliance  
Columbia, MO

National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD)  
Washington, DC

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum  
Washington, DC

National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA)  
Silver Spring, MD

National Council of Asian and Pacific Islander Physicians  
Washington, DC

National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
Nashville, TN

National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC)  
Washington, DC

National Task Force on Hepatitis B: Focus on Asians and Pacific Islanders  
San Francisco, CA

National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable (NVHR)  
Rohnert Park, CA

New Mexico Hepatitis C Alliance  
Albuquerque, NM

NAMA-Recovery  
New York, NY

NYC Hepatitis B Coalition  
New York, NY

NYC Hepatitis C Task Force  
New York, NY

New York Harm Reduction Educators (NYHRE)  
Bronx, NY

NYU Medical Center Midtown Hepatitis C Support Group  
New York City, NY

Office of Community Engagement and Cancer Disparities  
University of Chicago Comprehensive Cancer Center  
Chicago, IL

Ohio Asian American Health Coalition  
Columbus, OH

Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases (PKIDs)  
Vancouver, WA

Project Inform  
San Francisco, CA

REACH, Institutes for Behavior Resources  
Baltimore, MD

Recovery 2000, Inc.  
Chicago, IL

San Francisco Hep B Free  
San Francisco, CA

San Francisco Hepatitis C Task Force  
San Francisco, CA

Spears Foundation For Hepatitis C  
Franklin, TN

St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction  
Bronx, NY

Status C Unknown  
Medford, NY

STOPHepC  
Pelzer, SC

Tibotec Therapeutics  
Titusville, NJ

Treatment Action Group  
New York, NY

Trust for America's Health (TFAH)  
Washington, DC

Yet Inc.  
New York, NY