

Health Resources and
Services Administration
Rockville MD 20857

Dear Colleagues:

JUN - 1 1999

There is no question that a lack of access to high quality health care and tremendous disparities in health outcomes for many Americans are a major problem for our Nation. In recognition of this, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has adopted a goal of "100% access, 0% disparity" for all of our programs, including the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act. Simply stated, this means that we are redoubling our focus on achieving access to high quality health care for all persons living with HIV/AIDS and eliminating race, gender, and geographic disparities in health outcome.

We are writing to ask you to examine your own programmatic decisions and priorities in the light of this goal. Disparities in health outcome, lack of access to quality health care, pharmaceuticals, and other necessary services which allow people to access and remain in care continue to challenge all of us fighting for the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS. This is particularly important in light of the potential benefit that can be offered by high quality health care and by appropriate use of new anti-retroviral regimens. The Ryan White CARE Act provides one of the only mechanisms whereby our "100% access, 0% disparity" goal can be achieved in the face of this epidemic.

HRSA believes it essential, therefore, that services supported with CARE Act funds relate to this goal. In particular, social and support services should be designed to assist persons living with HIV/AIDS to overcome barriers to accessing and to sustain participation in health care services. We urge that services which do not meet this criteria not be prioritized for CARE Act funding.

We recognize that difficult decisions are made at all levels of the CARE Act program every day and we do not presume to know what exact package of services will best serve your particular community. Communities will ultimately decide for themselves how best to achieve "100% access and 0% disparities" for people living with HIV/AIDS. This request that you partner with us and examine your own efforts in light of HRSA's goals is intended, rather, to provide direction for local processes, focus program management, and to articulate a national context for the Ryan White Program. We stand prepared to offer technical assistance and support as you address these issues and intend to devote a considerable portion of our upcoming All Title meeting to these issues.

We look forward to strengthening our partnership with you to better meet our goal of "100% access, 0% disparities" for our most vulnerable citizens.

Sincerely,

Claude Earl Fox, M.D., M.P.H.
Administrator