



HIV/AIDS Bureau

Rockville, MD 20857

FEB 18 2010

Dear Colleague:

The HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) continues to support programs and efforts that assist eligible metropolitan areas (EMAs), transitional grant areas (TGAs) and States to identify and bring into care people who are living with HIV (PLWH) and are aware of their HIV status, but are not currently receiving HIV-related medical care. These PLWH constitute the “unmet need” of an area, and Ryan White programs face multiple and complex challenges in devising strategies to reduce unmet need rates.

Over the last several years, unmet need rates reported to HAB through use of the *Unmet Need Framework* have continued high and in some locations risen steadily. Estimates of the percentage of PLWH who know their status but are not receiving HIV-related medical care range from 20 percent on the low end to upwards of 50 percent in some areas. Evidence from the HIV/AIDS arena and from other chronic diseases such as diabetes and cancer have demonstrated clearly that trained consumers or peers are particularly well-suited to help find, inform, and assist people in entering and remaining in care and adhering to treatments.

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program has a rich and lengthy history of supporting the use of consumers to reduce unmet need. In early 2008, HAB continued to demonstrate its support of consumer-focused strategies to reduce unmet need through the competitive *National HIV Training and Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreements*. According to the Program Guidance, the purpose of the funding opportunity was to support training programs that would assist Part A and Part B grantees “as they work with consumers currently in care to reach the hardest-to-reach subpopulations with unmet need and help link them into ongoing care.” Through the cooperative agreement, HAB funded two organizations to provide training to Part A and Part B programs on strategies to utilize consumers in addressing unmet need: MOSAICA and the AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth and Families.

In 2009 the HAB Division of Training and Technical Assistance held a consultation on the *Utilization of Peers in Ryan White Programs as Part of the Interdisciplinary Care Team* (February 23, 2009). The meeting was attended by nearly 50 research experts, HAB staff, Ryan White grantees, peer educators, patient navigators, and representatives from non HIV programs (cancer and diabetes treatment programs) that utilize peers to improve client treatment and retention. The consensus opinion of the meeting, as described in the proceedings report, was that peers are uniquely positioned to effectively engage and help retain PLWH in care and treatment programs and, further, with appropriate training and supervision, they make remarkable contributions to the interdisciplinary team. The rewards of placing peers on interdisciplinary teams bring benefits to all patients and their families, clinical and support services providers, line staff, and the peers themselves.

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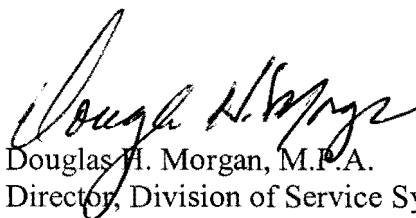
See TARGET Center TA Library at <http://careacttarget.org>, search “The Utilization and Role of Peers in HIV/AIDS Interdisciplinary Teams: Consultation Meeting Proceedings (2009). One way to learn about the strategies to reduce unmet need is to participate in training and technical assistance about effective approaches that utilize peers. Mosaica is currently providing training and technical assistance that focuses on four strategies, two engaging PLWH largely as volunteers, and two using PLWH as staff to link other PLWH into care and to keep them in care and adherent to their treatments. We urge you to become familiar with strategies for engaging consumers to link PLWH into care by participating in training sessions, requesting technical assistance through Mosaica or other HAB partners, and/or reviewing materials available online, and to seriously consider how to implement appropriate models in your own programs. HAB supports these efforts as important ways to meet legislative requirements for reducing unmet need. Such strategies will likely become even more important as we strive to meet new legislative requirements related to identifying individuals who do not know their status and making them aware of their status, with referral and linkage to care for those who are seropositive.

Please direct any questions you may have through the Division of Service Systems at (301) 443-3726.

Sincerely,



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Director, Division of Training and Technical Assistance



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