HHS Gathered More Stakeholder Input on the Next National HIV and Viral Hepatitis Strategies

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We gathered more valuable stakeholder input to inform the development of the next iterations of both the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) and National Viral Hepatitis Action Plan (NVHAP) during an in-person listening session at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on February 22, 2019. More than 60 HIV and viral hepatitis community stakeholders shared an array of ideas about what each national strategy should address. They represented people living with and at risk for HIV and/or viral hepatitis, health care providers, public health professionals, advocates and a broad array of other stakeholders in both national plans.

Among their many thoughtful recommendations were that the next national HIV and viral hepatitis strategies:

- Engage communities in developing tailored approaches and solutions that are responsive to particular needs;
- Engage programs that are not specific to HIV or viral hepatitis but that reach key populations including Title X clinics, adolescent health programs, and substance use prevention and treatment services;
- Include syringe services programs, medication-assisted treatment, and other responses to the syndemic of substance use as key strategies to reduce HIV and HCV infections;
- Expand support for telehealth programs to increase access to HIV, hepatitis, and PrEP expertise in both rural and urban areas; and
- Increase educational opportunities for a broad spectrum of healthcare providers, especially primary care providers, to reduce HIV- or hepatitis-related discrimination among providers, and build capacity across health systems to provide testing, prevention, and care services.

Recommendations specific to the HIV strategy included:

- Incorporate strategies to address complications of HIV and aging given the increasing number of people living with HIV on effective treatment who are growing older;
- HIV drugs should remain available through Medicare Part D without requirements for prior authorization and step therapy;
- Add a time-bound indicator on viral suppression;
- Continue research for an HIV cure; and
- Maintain a data-driven focus to reduce HIV infections among the populations most affected by HIV: gay and bisexual men, African Americans, people in the South, transgender women, people who inject drugs, and young people of color.

Recommendations specific to the viral hepatitis strategy included:

- Address the gaps in hepatitis B vaccination and testing being revealed by the opioid crisis and incorporate HBV screening, vaccination, and linkage to care in all HCV services being

implemented in response to it;

- Highlight the connection between HBV and liver cancer;
- Combat hepatitis B and hepatitis C stigma and discrimination;
- Support research for an HCV vaccination that works for people living with HIV, people who inject drugs, pregnant women, and others; and
- Work to reduce HCV treatment access limitations in various programs and settings.

All of the valuable input we received during this listening session will inform the work of the federal interagency workgroups developing the next iterations of each of these national strategies.

This listening session was one in a series of opportunities for stakeholders and the public to offer ideas and recommendations about these national strategies, the current versions of which expire in 2020. The final in our series of listening sessions takes place later this month at CDC's National HIV Prevention Conference. To ensure that all people have the opportunity to provide comments, recommendations, and ideas for developing the next iterations of the NHAS and the NVHAP, we published a Request for Information (RFI) in the Federal Register. This is open for public comment through March 11, 2019, and we encourage you to share your input.

As the interagency workgroups begin the work of developing these important national strategies, we will continue to share progress updates here on this website.

We are listening! It's not too late to send in your ideas- written comments for the next iterations of the #HIV and viral #hepatitis national strategies open through March 11, 2019. https://go.usa.gov/xEfGp

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