



## Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration

**Issue: Withdraw the transitional housing policy that establishes a cumulative 24-month lifetime service cap per household for use of Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program funds for short-term and emergency housing assistance.**

**Explanation:** HRSA HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB) Policy Notice 99-02 Amendment #1, Federal Register, February 26, 2008 (Vol. 73, No. 38) p. 10260 directs grantees on the use of Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program funds for short-term and emergency housing assistance for persons living with HIV/AIDS. Amendment #1 which took effect March 27, 2008 limits the duration of short-term and emergency housing assistance to a lifetime cumulative period of 24 months per household. In communicating the new policy to Ryan White Grantees, HRSA indicates that the policy is derived from a 2004 DHHS Office of Inspector General report (related to the situation in a specifically-identified locality in which housing assistance was provided for a number of years) instructing HRSA to “clarify the definition of short term and emergency housing assistance by establishing a time limit.” <ftp://ftp.hrsa.gov/hab/0801.pdf>.

HRSA has been urged to reconsider the policy amendment in light of 1) the lack of affordable housing in many of the areas most severely impacted by HIV/AIDS and the significant barrier homelessness imposes on an individual attempting to adhere to HIV/AIDS care and treatment; 2) the need to maintain Ryan White transitional housing assistance as an episodic gap filler and emergency safety net; and 3) the potentially life threatening consequences associated with locking individuals out of an essential service after a period of relative stability totally ignoring the challenges of HIV treatment and the cyclical and episodic nature of HIV disease. An arbitrary caps on access to care is counterproductive because of housing’s central importance to adherence. The flexibility to make housing assistance available without federally imposed time limits is essential in the context of an environment in which 1) only one in four households eligible for federal housing assistance receive it; 2) the full impact of the real estate foreclosure crisis on renters, including those with HIV and other chronic illnesses, is unknown; and 3) the wait for AIDS housing in some communities is at crisis levels.

**Requested Action:** Withdrawal of Policy Notice 99-02 Amendment #1 by the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration. Such action, which would eliminate the cumulative 24 month lifetime cap on housing assistance, would in no way undermine the requirement that Ryan White grantees and community-based providers develop a written transitional housing plan, in coordination with other programs, to identify permanent housing, maintain access to quality care, to support long-term housing needs consistent with HRSA’s concurrence in housing’s essential role in access and adherence. (see March 28, 2008 letter of Deborah Parham Hopson, Assistant Surgeon General and Associate Administrator, DHHS, HRSA, HIV/AIDS Bureau to Nancy Bernstine, Executive Director, National AIDS Housing Coalition, Washington, DC.) Research documenting this connection is summarized in the attached policy paper from the National AIDS Housing Coalition, “*Examining the Evidence: The Impact of Housing on HIV Prevention and Care*”; Third Housing and HIV/AIDS Research Summit, March 2008. Parts of the policy notice which may remain necessary to “clarify and update certain nomenclature found in the original housing policy 99-02”, but excluding the 24 month cap could be reissued.

Submitted by National AIDS Housing Coalition

December 17, 2008

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