

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Douglas M. Brooks  
Director, Office of National AIDS Policy  
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Brooks:

I wanted to take this opportunity to share recommendations developed by the CDC-sponsored *Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (EMCT) Stakeholders Group* and the *Expert Panel on Reproductive Health and Preconception Care for Persons Living with HIV*. These groups are each comprised of approximately 50 HIV experts from federal agencies, state and local health departments, academia, clinical care settings, consumer advocacy and national professional organizations. Meetings of the groups were held the week of May 25<sup>th</sup>. Our recommendations address existing gaps in the HIV care continuum related to women living with HIV and their partners.

#### **Reducing new HIV infections**

- Increase awareness of nPEP and PrEP for HIV-negative partners of people living with HIV
- Increase the number of providers/sites where nPEP and PrEP are provided and increase the coordination of STD and PrEP care, especially in high-incidence geographic areas
- Support the implementation of trauma, mental health and substance abuse screening into HIV testing and counseling services. Prioritize these clients for active, evidence-based linkage to HIV and mental health care.
- Test innovative approaches to identify discordant male/female couples, e.g., couples/partner testing
- Assure HIV testing for all pregnant women and repeat HIV testing in 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester according to CDC recommendations and laws and regulations of the jurisdiction.
- Add gender and perinatal HIV transmission to considerations of race, ethnicity, and culture in the epidemiologic profile of targeted populations for funded high-impact HIV prevention activities. Jurisdictions with a high proportion of cases of HIV among women of reproductive age and cases of perinatal HIV transmission should support the implementation of gender specific evidence-based approaches to HIV prevention and best practices for perinatal HIV prevention.

#### **Improving health care access and health outcomes for people living with HIV**

- Develop, implement and evaluate models to integrate preconception care, family planning, safer conception and reproductive health services for men and women living with HIV.
- Prioritize active linkage and retention services for pregnant and post-partum women, infants, and anyone with mental illness or substance abuse issues.
- Improve access to mental health and substance abuse services by addressing workforce shortages and workforce training needs. Further develop and provide training for evidence-based retention in care and adherence interventions geared specifically for women and men with a history of trauma, mental illness or substance abuse.
- Scale-up implementation of effective models of integrated behavioral health and HIV care services. Where services are not integrated, require active, evidence-based linkages to reproductive health, mental health and substance abuse treatment services.

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy has played a critical role in identifying key action steps to align efforts across all levels of government to impact the domestic HIV epidemic. Moving forward, we strongly recommend the additional key actions listed above in order to address critical gaps in the strategy related to HIV treatment and prevention for women and their partners.

Sincerely,

*Mary Jo Hoyt*

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