$155M in Federal COVID-19 Relief Funds Goes to HIV Programs

Here's how HIV funding from the CARES Act gets divided

April 22, 2020 By Trent Straube

The federal Coronavirus Aids, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which President Trump signed into law March 27, includes $155 million for HIV programs. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, this breaks down into $90 million for the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and $65 million for the Housing for People with AIDS (HOPWA) Program.

That some of the CARES Act funds addresses the needs of people living with HIV makes sense. Not only are people with HIV affected by the coronavirus pandemic like most other Americans—through economic losses and stay-at-home orders, for example—but they're also at higher risk for health problems, notably if they've lost employer-based health insurance or if they're unable to maintain an undetectable viral load.

For more details about that, see "UPDATED: What People With HIV Need to Know About the New Coronavirus."

The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program offers medical care, support programs and medication for people living with HIV who are uninsured or underserved. Launched in 1990, the program grants money to states, counties, cities and community-based organizations, including for training and educational programs. It is overseen by the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The video below was created in 2015 to mark the program's 25th anniversary.

"This new investment is vital to enabling the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to continue responding to the increasing needs of their patients and communities during this challenging time," said HHS Secretary Alex Azar in an HHS statement. "The Trump administration remains committed to ending the HIV epidemic in America by 2030, and we will continue building on the success of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to do it."

According to the press release, the COVID-19 funding will support 581 Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program recipients. For a list of award recipients, visit:

https://hab.hrsa.gov/coronavirus/cares-FY2020-awards.

“HRSA’s Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program provides services to more than half a million people with HIV each year,” said HRSA administrator Tom Engels in the statement. “The dedicated work of these program recipients has helped 87% of Ryan White HIV/AIDS clients achieve viral suppression. Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program recipients have established trust and an unmatched ability to provide quality care to their clients. As the nation confronts the COVID-19 pandemic, this infusion of additional funding will assist recipients to better respond to this new threat in their communities while maintaining their ability to provide HIV primary medical care, medications and support services to their patients.”

The CARES Act also includes up to $65 million for HOPWA, the HIV-related housing program overseen by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Similar to the Ryan White program, HUD awards HOPWA grants to local communities, states and nonprofit groups that work with low-income people living with HIV. You can learn more about HUD’s grantees’ here.

Congress is expected to pass more coronavirus relief funding in late April, though Politico reports that the focus will be on small businesses, hospitals, states and COVID-19 testing.

In related news, are you familiar with Ryan White, the HIV-positive teen advocate who won over the hearts of conservatives in the 1980s and inspired the legislation that bears his name? To learn more, read Shawn Decker’s POZ Blog post from earlier this month: “Ryan White: Remembering Him Three Decades Later.”

Go to poz.com/tag/coronavirus for our continuing coverage of COVID-19.

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