What Can You Do?: HRSA Requests Comments to Support HIV Social Services

People with HIV who receive supportive services through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program have a high level of viral suppression.

June 17, 2021 By Heather Boerner

The Positive Women's Network–USA (PWN-USA) is asking people living with or affected by HIV to comment on a proposed government rule that would allow the staff of clinics funded by the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program to spend more time with clients and less time on government paperwork.

The revised rule, Updates to Uniform Standard for Waiver of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Core Medical Services Expenditure, was issued April 20, 2021; all comments are due by June 21.

The revision—a bureaucratic change to a procedure for applying for a waiver for how Ryan White clinics spend their money—is the wonkiest of wonky changes. But here's how it could affect access to undetectable viral loads for you and others living with HIV, according to PWN-USA:

- The waiver already exists, and it's an important one that allows clinics to spend more than 25% of their budget on social services for people living with HIV.
- Notably, these services can include housing, childcare during clinic visits, funds to cover transportation costs to and from clinic visits, language services and even substance use residential services.
- Right now, to apply for the waiver, clinic staff must gather lots of documents and data and spend considerable time completing
- The proposed change cuts that paperwork down to a single-page form to fill out.

Not all clinics can avail themselves of this waiver. Only clinics receiving Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program funds for parts A, B or C can apply. They must show that there is no local waiting list for people to gain access to the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, which covers the cost of HIV

medications for people who wouldn’t have affordable access otherwise, and that all of the core medical needs of current clients are met within the budget. That way, clinics are sure to meet everyone’s medical needs.

When people living with HIV have access to housing, transportation and other so-called social determinants of health, studies show that they are also more likely to have an undetectable viral load, which leads to better health and a reduction in HIV transmission.

Interested people can send comments to the Health Resources and Services Administration either by directly emailing RyanWhiteComments@hrsa.gov or by filling out a form provided by PWN-USA.

Click here for more news about the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program.

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