SAMHSA Commits to Sustaining and Accelerating HIV Progress

How the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) works to meet the needs of people affected by and living with HIV

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Note: On December 18, 2024, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) shared this World AIDS Day message, and we are cross-posting it for HIV.gov readers who may have missed it.

World AIDS Day, established in 1988 and observed annually on December 1, is a day to commemorate the 42 million people globally who have died from AIDS-related illnesses since the start of the epidemic, and honor the more than 39 million people, including 1.2 million Americans, living with HIV around the world. This year's World AIDS Day theme, Collective Action: Sustain and Accelerate HIV Progress, serves as an important reminder that we must remain steadfast in our commitment to prevent new HIV infections and provide essential services to all people living with HIV. However, despite the advancements we have made around the world and in the United States, our progress has been uneven, and challenges remain. In too many communities, limited public awareness, lack of access, and sparse partner engagement continue to create barriers to comprehensive HIV prevention and treatment.

SAMHSA's mission is to lead public health and service delivery efforts that promote mental health, prevent substance misuse, and provide treatments and supports to foster recovery while ensuring equitable access and better outcomes. SAMHSA's grant recipients work to address the syndemic of HIV, viral hepatitis, substance use disorders, and mental illness. At SAMHSA, we are committed to building on the significant progress that has been made over the last four-plus decades of the collective national HIV response and continuing to improve our programming based on ongoing evidence-based research on prevention, treatment, and implementation science, as well as pragmatic lessons learned from SAMHSA-funded grant recipients in the field.

New in 2024, SAMHSA awarded $9.6 million in grants to pilot innovative approaches to meet the behavioral health needs of people who are either at risk for or living with HIV/AIDS. These pilots include:

- $5.4 million for the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI): SUD Prevention and Treatment Pilot Program,

an innovative pilot that braids funding from the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, to provide a continuum of care approach that provides substance use prevention, substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, and infectious disease prevention and treatment services including HIV, viral hepatitis, and STI prevention, and linkage to treatment services for disproportionately impacted populations, including racial and ethnic individuals vulnerable to a SUD and/or mental health condition and HIV/AIDS.

- $2.6 million for the Minority AIDS Initiative: Integrated Behavioral Health and HIV Care for Unsheltered Populations Pilot Project, which pilots an integrated portable clinical care approach that combines behavioral health and HIV treatment and prevention services to people experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

- $1.6 million for the Syndemic Approach to Preventing HIV and Substance Use Among Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities, which seeks to advance equity in health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities, especially all Black female identities, including cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, and genderqueer/fluid individuals in the SouthC who are experiencing disparities related to HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis (VH), sexually transmitted infections (STIs), substance use and substance use disorders (SUDs), and/or mental health conditions.

In 2023, SAMHSA released its 2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan, which prioritizes integrating behavioral and physical health care, including HIV prevention, testing, and linkage to treatment into SAMHSA's behavioral health grant portfolio. The MAI-funded grant programs focus on providing prevention resources to people who are at risk for HIV, diagnosing people who do not know they have HIV, and linking people with HIV to treatment and are in alignment with the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) (PDF, 1.8 MB), reflect SAMHSA's commitments laid out in our contribution to the NHAS Federal Implementation Plan (PDF, 707 KB), and are in alignment with the goals of the Ending the HIV Epidemic in the U.S. (EHE) initiative, of which SAMHSA is a proud contributing agency. SAMHSA also has contributed to the Viral Hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections Strategic Plans, which HHS is now in the process of revising).

Consistent with the theme of 2024's World AIDS Day, SAMHSA is recommitting to sustaining and accelerating our efforts towards progress on HIV. We would also like to thank our staff, grantees, federal partners, health care providers, and the substance use and mental health community in

working toward our shared goal of ending the HIV epidemic in the United States. Thank you for the work you do to save lives and improve the health of the people of America.

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