



February 9, 2011

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Affirming Persons, Saving Lives will soon be available online

Wider Church Ministries has partnered with UCAN to produce an online version of the United Church of Christ's comprehensive HIV prevention curriculum, *Affirming Persons, Saving Lives*. Some components of the curriculum will be launched during the 2011 National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS, March 6-12. [Learn more...](#)



Wait Lists for AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAP) reaches 6,001

written by Michael Schuenemeyer, Executive Director, UCAN Inc.

The National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD) reports that there are an ever growing number of people living with HIV being placed on wait lists for access to HIV antiretroviral medications. HIV antiretroviral medications are life-saving drugs that extend both the length and quality of life. Yet, the cost of antiretroviral drugs is out of reach for most people who are either uninsured or under-insured. The AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, which are run

by the states and are primarily funded by the federal government, fill this important treatment gap, particularly for many Black and Latina/o people living with HIV or AIDS.

As of February 4, 2011, more than 6,000 people had been placed on wait lists across 10 states (<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/70928935/ADAP-watch-update>). Some states have changed their eligibility requirements, making it more difficult for people to qualify for ADAP and in some cases, removing clients who did not meet the stricter requirements.

In July of last year, when the wait lists had grown to about 2,100, advocacy groups and state officials urged the Obama administration to provide \$126 million in emergency assistance for ADAPs to cover the needs to the end of the fiscal year. The Obama administration only allocated \$25 million in emergency assistance. With wait lists now more than 6,000 and growing, much more funding is needed to provide the treatment people must have to go on living with this disease.

The need for ADAPs is not going away anytime soon. The U.S. HIV epidemic continues to grow. Plus, the CDC has urged everyone to know their status and has made a major push for routine HIV testing. Consequently more people are being tested which means more people are discovering they have HIV. About 38% of those who test positive for HIV are diagnosed with AIDS within one year.

Access to treatment is also a critical component of effective HIV prevention. When treatment is available persons are more likely to get tested and persons who know their status are less likely to engage in behaviors that spread HIV. Treatment also lowers the amount of virus circulating in the bloodstream, reducing the likelihood of transmission.

As the new Congress considers the next federal budget, there is much talk about cutting expenses and looking to social programs for those cuts. ADAPs must be spared any cuts. They provide access to life-saving medications to those who are least able to afford them, reduce HIV transmission, and thus, are essential programs which must be fully resourced. Not only are the lives of people living with HIV or AIDS at stake, but so are decades of HIV prevention efforts.



National HIV/AIDS Strategy Moves Forward

Last summer the Obama administration unveiled the [National HIV/AIDS Strategy](#), the first of its kind in this country. The implementation of the strategy made small steps forward on Thursday, January 27, 2011, at the meeting of the 25 member President's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA). At this meeting, federal agencies presented oral summaries of how they plan to carry out the strategy in order to achieve the plan's primary goals, which are:

1. Reducing the number of people who become infected with HIV,

2. Increasing access to care and optimizing health outcomes for people living with HIV, and
3. Reducing HIV-related health disparities.

The overall vision for the National HIV/AIDS Strategy declares, *“The United States will become a place where new HIV infections are rare and when they do occur, every person, regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or socio-economic circumstance, will have unfettered access to high quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination.”*

UCAN is interested to hear your thoughts about the National HIV/AIDS Strategy and how you think faith-based organization might work towards achieving its vision and goals. Please send your comments to UCAN@ucc.org.

To learn more about UCAN and the United Church of Christ’s response to HIV, [click here](#).

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