



Ventura County Public Health

A Division of the Ventura County Health Care Agency

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ventura County's HIV/AIDS program has suffered devastating losses in funding over the last few years. In 2009, its budget was reduced by the State by approximately 65%. This reduction eliminated numerous HIV/AIDS related programs and subcontractors providing HIV/AIDS services. These reductions included:

- Education and Prevention - approximately 80% of high risk outreach sites were eliminated.
- HIV/AIDS Counseling and Testing - over 1600 clients will no longer have HIV counseling and testing services which will result in the at-risk population going undiagnosed, HIV infected individuals progressing quicker to AIDS, and re-infection of themselves and first time infection of others.
- Early Intervention Program - over 200 clients accessed medical care, mental health, medication and counseling services through our county's program. This program was critical in providing early intervention services to reduce the progression of HIV disease and provide risk reduction education.
- Case Management Program – approximately 50 to 75 clients received comprehensive services through this program including registered nurse and social worker case management, medical care, mental health services, benefits counseling, medication assistance/adherence, end stage disease management, housing/utility assistance to prevent homelessness, risk reduction, psycho-social assessment, transportation assistance for medically related visits, food pantry/vouchers and client advocacy.
- Therapeutic Monitoring Program - specific laboratory tests (viral loads and CD4 testing) were provided through this program. These are important lab values used to medically manage the HIV-infected patient and to meet the requirement for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program that provides HIV medications.
- AIDS Drug Assistance Program – this program, founded in 1987, helped ensure that HIV-positive uninsured and under-insured individuals would have access to medication. This program's recipients are no longer being provided medications.
- Subcontractors eliminated:
 - AIDS Project Ventura County (APVC) dba Ventura County Rainbow Alliance (VCRA) AIDS Center – CBO provided HIV counseling and testing, education and prevention, mental health counseling, food bank and case management services.
 - Immunology Clinic – this local center of excellence lost funding for a psychologist, a mental health therapist and a pharmacist/treatment adherence counselor.
 - Planned Parenthood – this CBO provided HIV/AIDS Education and Prevention.

This fiscal year, 2010-2011, Ventura County Public Health HIV/AIDS Program was reduced another 65.8% or \$140,000, which has resulted in the further reduction and elimination of available client services.

Studies have shown that getting and maintaining HIV infected individuals into care is critical to managing the disease, reducing transmission and reducing hospitalizations therefore reducing health care costs. Services provided by the Ventura County HIV/AIDS Program through State, Federal, and local grants are critical to the management of HIV.

Lifetime medical care for those who become infected with HIV each year in the United States is estimated to cost \$20 billion. Gay and bisexual men of all races, African-Americans, Latinos, and injection drug users are most affected. But many old and new HIV infections are seen in heterosexual men and women. The highest risk heterosexuals are in their teens, twenties and in those over 50 years of age.

An estimated 1.2 million people in the US are living with HIV. Of these, approximately 21% (1 in 5) are unaware that they are HIV-positive and are at increased risk for infecting others. According to the CDC's most recent estimates, 56,000 persons have been infected with HIV annually over the last decade. More than 18,000 with AIDS die each year in the US. Despite new therapies, people with HIV still develop AIDS.

The epidemic is different in every city and every state. Some groups are harder hit by HIV than others. It is important for people to understand that it affects us all and can affect any age group, race, gender.

According to the Center for Disease Control, "This number is expected to continue to increase over time, as antiretroviral treatments prolong the lives of those who are infected and more people become infected with HIV than die from the disease each year. As the number of people living with HIV grows, so does the opportunity for HIV transmission to others."