



FIGHTING MEDICAID CUTS: A State-Based HIV Advocacy Initiative

ABOUT TAEP

The mission of the Treatment Access Expansion Project (TAEP) is to improve early access to care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS. TAEP is a collaboration of national and community-based organizations, health care providers, and pharmaceutical industry members working together to achieve this goal. The mission is accomplished through several activities:

- Coordinating efforts to secure passage of the Early Treatment for HIV Act (ETHA) that would allow states the option to readily provide Medicaid coverage to persons living with HIV.
- Supporting state-based efforts to expand access to Medicaid including the development of HIV expansion waivers.
- Working to ensure that federal and state healthcare programs (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare and the Ryan White CARE Act) do not implement policies that cause financial hardship nor create barriers to getting life-saving care and treatment for beneficiaries living with HIV.

MEDICAID IS UNDER ATTACK

As states struggle with dire economic conditions and mounting deficits, many are looking at their Medicaid programs – often one of the biggest budget items – for ways to cut costs. According to a recent report, 49 states and the District of Columbia have implemented or planned Medicaid cost containment measures in fiscal year 2004. Such measures include:

- Cutting benefits and services covered
- Eliminating “optional” services and enrollment categories
- Restricting eligibility guidelines
- Imposing premiums and cost-sharing
- Limiting access to prescription drugs

ABOUT OUR STATE-BASED HIV ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

Given the important role that Medicaid plays in the lives of those with HIV/AIDS, ensuring access has become an increasingly visible and essential part of TAEP’s work. Medicaid is the single largest public health care provider for people with HIV/AIDS in the United States. For people living with HIV/AIDS, access to comprehensive health care and prescription medications is literally a matter of life and death. Therefore, any changes to the status of Medicaid programs that hinder this access must be challenged.

The goals of TAEP's *Fighting Medicaid Cuts – A State-Based HIV Advocacy Initiative* are:

- To provide information to consumers, advocates, providers and other concerned parties about pending Medicaid waivers and the implications of Medicaid reform for persons living with HIV/ AIDS, mental illness and other chronic conditions.
- To generate a grassroots response and strategic plan to preserve Medicaid provisions that impact access to care and treatment for persons living with HIV/ AIDS, mental illness and other chronic conditions.

Beginning in Fall 2004, TAEP and its project partners – **the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA), The AIDS Institute (TAI) and the National Mental Health Association (NMHA)** – will conduct trainings for key advocates in Alabama, Colorado, Florida, Mississippi, California and Ohio.

The trainings will cover the following activities:

- Demystifying Medicaid – an overview of the Medicaid program, why it matters to people living with HIV and other chronic illnesses and principles for fighting cuts.
- Hands-on support on how to work with and influence decision makers in state public health and Medicaid agencies, state legislatures and Congress.
- Grassroots organizing – an overview of how to develop and support a grassroots Medicaid advocacy network and implement a grassroots advocacy campaign.
- Working with the media.
- Building and partnering with broader health advocacy coalitions (e.g., mental health, hepatitis, and public health care providers).
- Leveraging state-specific research to support current and/or pending Medicaid challenges.

After the initial training, TAEP trainers and researchers will continue to provide support and resources to the advocacy community by:

- Using the “train the trainers” model to seed Medicaid advocacy capacity in communities throughout the state.
- Facilitating advocacy with state and local elected and appointed officials.
- Providing ongoing technical assistance through state-specific research and material development, assistance in the development of advocacy campaigns and additional trainings to support state-based efforts to preserve and/or expand the Medicaid program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to learn more about *Fighting Medicaid Cuts: A State-Based HIV Advocacy Initiative*, please contact Aryka Chapman, TAEP Program Director, at 240-247-1012 or achapman@napwa.org.