



# News Release

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News Division

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## **Secretary Sebelius Announces Innovative Public-Private Partnerships to Turn the Tide Together in Fight Against HIV/AIDS**

*Speaks at International AIDS Conference Opening Session*

In a speech at the opening session of the XIX International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2012), Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius announced a series of innovative public-private partnerships in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The four initiatives include (1) using text messaging to improve patient management of disease; (2) partnering with a national pharmacy chain to develop an innovative medication therapy management; (3) creating a common, easy to use form for HIV patient assistance program applicants; and (4) launching online education modules to better train providers to treat people living with HIV/AIDS.

“We are reminded over and over again that we need a collective response to turn the tide against HIV/AIDS,” said Secretary Sebelius. “That’s why we’re making a new effort to reach out to community-based organizations, businesses, foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), faith-based organizations and other partners to ask how we can work together. These public-private partnerships will help make a difference in people’s lives.”

The four specific public-private initiatives that will improve access to HIV care and align with the Administration’s goal of an AIDS-free generation are:

**Common Patient Assistance Program Application.** HHS’ Health Resources and Services Administration worked with eight leading pharmaceutical companies and foundations to create a single application form for AIDS medications offered through their patient assistance programs. The eight companies, Abbot Laboratories, Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol Myers Squibb, Gilead, Genentech, Johnson and Johnson, Merck, and ViiV, will begin accepting the common form starting September 1, 2012.

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This single common form will allow uninsured individuals living with HIV to apply for multiple assistance programs, providing coverage for an entire course of antiretroviral therapy regardless of manufacturer.

By reducing barriers to medication access for those living with HIV, this streamlined process will encourage eligible patients to begin or continue their needed treatment. A sample form is available at <http://hab.hrsa.gov/patientassistance/index.html>.

**UCARE4LIFE.** HHS, in partnership with the MAC AIDS Foundation, will launch a mobile texting pilot program called UCARE4LIFE to help patients get important reminders and tips for managing their disease. This two-year project will focus on southern states, where the epidemic is rising fast among youth. It consists of developing a message library for delivering timely phone text reminders in English and Spanish to HIV-positive individuals for medical appointments and for taking medications as prescribed. Many people living with HIV have trouble adhering to the strict regimen that accompanies their medication, and this initiative aims to improve retention in care and medication adherence. This project is a part of MAC AIDS Foundation's larger \$4.5 million *Care for Life Initiative*.

HHS and PEPFAR are also partnering with MAC AIDS Foundation on a project to ensure that the global provider community, along with the people living with HIV involved in these programs, fully leverage global lessons on expanding treatment access and retaining people in HIV care. The project will bring together international leaders to explore the lessons learned through PEPFAR that could be applied to the U.S. The information shared at this meeting will be compiled in a report for use as a resource on best practices in treatment access and retention.

**Pharmacy Medication Therapy Management.** HHS' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will partner with Walgreens to develop an innovative medication therapy management program to learn how pharmacies can help patients stay on their medications and in care. The 3½ -year project is entitled "Improving Retention in Care, Adherence, and HIV Prevention Behaviors of Persons with HIV through Medication Therapy Management of HIV Disease in Community Pharmacies." The project will evaluate new collaborative agreements between health care providers and community pharmacists designed to deliver drug therapy management and other supportive services to improve (1) retention in care, (2) adherence to drug treatment regimens, and, ultimately, (3) improve health outcomes among their HIV-infected patients. Walgreens is providing nearly \$1 million in in-kind services.

**Online Physician Training Programs.** HHS' Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services worked with Medscape, a provider of online continuing education for U.S. clinicians, to create new training programs to help health care providers better understand and address the needs of patients with HIV. Three new training modules have been created for physicians, nurses and other medical professionals to review the basics of evaluation, monitoring, and treatment

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initiation in HIV-infected patients; explain the benefits of starting HIV treatment earlier; recognize and evaluate potential barriers to access to HIV care; and understand how to bridge the financial barriers to care, particularly under the Affordable Care Act. This new training will benefit the 60 percent of physicians who receive continuing medical education through Medscape. The training modules are available at:

<http://www.medscape.org/viewprogram/32555?src=cmsaca>.

In addition, earlier this week, on July 19, HHS announced nearly \$80 million in grants to increase access to HIV/AIDS care across the U.S. The funding will ensure that low-income people living with HIV/AIDS continue to have access to life-saving health care and medications.

Approximately \$69 million will be sent to 25 states and territories through the Ryan White AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), and based on estimates provided by the states, will eliminate any waiting lists.

The more than \$10 million remaining will be distributed to Ryan White community-based health clinics nationwide to expand access to 14,000 new patients for essential medical and support services for people living with HIV/AIDS. A portion of this funding was made available through the Affordable Care Act. A list of grantees and awards is available at:

<http://www.hrsa.gov/about/news/2012tables/120724hiv/>.

In addition, the Affordable Care Act is already making a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS by prohibiting lifetime caps on benefits, creating pre-existing condition insurance plans for people who are denied private insurance, requiring that HIV testing is available through insurance plans without cost-sharing, and making drugs more affordable for Medicare beneficiaries.

“In the 22 years since this conference was held on American soil, we have made long-awaited breakthroughs in science and treatment. Today, someone diagnosed with HIV and treated before the disease is far advanced can have a nearly normal life expectancy,” said Secretary Sebelius. “Now is not the time for easing up, slowing down, or shifting our focus. If we are going to reach our ultimate goal of an AIDS-free generation, we must all challenge ourselves to do more – to work collaboratively and creatively in public private partnerships, to reach even more people, to make programs even more effective and accountable, and to push the boundaries of science even further.”

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