

A grim milestone

Entering the major leagues of federal AIDS/HIV funding will help local agencies meet the growing need for services

by Inga Sorensen

Although it is illegal to discriminate against people based on their perceived HIV/AIDS status, Susan Stoltenberg, executive director of Cascade AIDS Project, estimates she receives "one or two" calls a week from citizens who believe they've been denied housing for that very reason. "Landlords remain woefully ignorant about HIV/AIDS," she says. "That ignorance can translate into limited housing opportunities for people with AIDS, even though it's illegal." Stoltenberg, who heads up Oregon's largest non-medical AIDS service organization, hopes that will change thanks to a recent infusion of federal funds to the Portland metropolitan area.

Many times, people living with AIDS are too weak to leave their homes, and their financial resources are often limited. Even getting a hot and nutritious meal is a stretch, both physically and financially. That's why, says Tina Tommaso

Jennings, program manager for Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's HIV Day Center, it's imperative that service providers be able to get to those people. "We bring them meals through our Daily Bread Express program. These people are homebound. They don't have the ability to go out and go shopping for food," she says. "We've been struggling to get meals to them, and up until now we were only able to bring a few meals to a few people. Now we will be able to get many more meals each day to many more people."

CAP and EMO are among the beneficiaries of an estimated \$1.3 million federal grant designed to support people with HIV/AIDS in need of urgent care. The grant

is in the form of Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act Title I supplemental funding and will allow for a major expansion of services for people living with HIV/AIDS within a six-county area centered in Portland.

"This is both a [time] of sadness and of joy," said Multnomah County Chair Beverly Stein during a June press conference. "It's sad that we've reached the point where we've become eligible for these funds, but we're also very pleased we're now able to expand services to people living with HIV and AIDS."

This past December the Portland metropolitan area received \$986,510 in Ryan White CARE Act Title I formula grants, which are awarded noncompetitively to areas reporting 2,000 or more cumulative cases of AIDS. This marked the first time since the act's passage in 1990 that the region was eligible for Title I funds.

In February, federal health officials announced the allocation of \$174.7 million in supplemental Title I funds, which are awarded competitively on evidence of unmet needs of an area's residents living with HIV/AIDS. Nearly all of the \$1.5 million in supplemental funds requested by AIDS funding advocates representing the Portland metro

area was granted.

The Portland-area HIV Services Planning Council, a 30-member regional HIV/AIDS planning and policy body established by Stein (under federal mandate) was the key player in deciding how the funds would be allocated. The region covered by the Title I grants encompasses Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, Washington and Yamhill counties, as well as Clark County, Wash.

Health officials say the money will be used to provide for medical, dental and mental health services; housing assistance; a variety of client advocacy services including direct emergency financial assistance, food services, and insurance continuation; and several other services.

The majority of services provided through this funding will be delivered by community-based nonprofit health and social-service agencies, under contract with the Multnomah County Health Department.

"Many, many services are being expanded thanks to this funding," says Loreen Nichols, program development specialist for the Multnomah County Health Department.

A sampling of the funding allocation: CAP will receive \$327,000 for housing assistance; \$45,000 for its Buddy/Companion Services; and \$147,000 for direct emergency financial assistance for clients' household utilities, eyeglasses, and other critical personal needs. EMO will receive \$280,000 for its program that helps clients continue their insurance payments; \$93,500 to expand its HIV Day Center services and provide in-

home respite care; and \$93,500 to expand its meal services, both at the Day Center and to homebound people. Oregon Health Sciences University will receive \$269,897 to enhance and ensure access to treatment and support services for people with HIV/AIDS through a comprehensive case management system. In addition, Esther's Pantry will receive \$20,000 for its monthly food-box program; Phoenix Rising will receive \$35,000 to assist with its individual and group mental health counseling programs; the Russell Street Dental Clinic will get \$70,000 to provide dental services to people with HIV/AIDS; and Women's Intercommunity AIDS Resource will receive \$3,000 for support groups for women living with HIV and children of parents living with HIV. Several other service providers throughout the region have received Title I funds.

For information about new and expanded services available to people with HIV and AIDS in the six-county area, call the Portland-area HIV Services Planning Council at 306-5730. The council is also seeking "diverse community members" who wish to be a part of its community planning process.



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—Beverly Stein



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HIV University is funded by the Ryan White Care Act (Title I)