

Advancing a more coordinated, accountable, and outcomes-oriented response through advocacy toward a National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States

Lessons in advocacy for stronger federal responses to the epidemic

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NATIONAL HIV/AIDS STRATEGY PUBLIC TESTIMONY WORK SHEETⁱ

The HIV Prevention Justice Alliance developed this work sheet to assist community stakeholders in preparing brief remarks for community discussions hosted across the US by the White House on the Strategy. By completing each section of the work sheet, individuals formulated brief remarks and recommendations on the Strategy:

INTRODUCTION:

- Relevant info about me
- About my community
- Relationship to epidemic

MY ISSUE RELATES MOST TO:

- Outcomes or process (or both)?
- Prevention, care, or health disparities?
- Cross-cutting themes?

MY CONCERN REQUIRES:

- 10-25 words

SOLVING THIS CONCERN REQUIRES:

- 3 or fewer recommendations to address concern

BEYOND FUNDING, ACTION ON THIS ISSUE ALSO REQUIRES:

- How policy and/or management changes can advance progress on this issue

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADDRESSING THIS CONCERN LIES WITH:

- Who within and beyond the federal government must be involved?

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ADDRESSING THIS CONCERN:

- Describe the population and individual consequences of your issue NOT being addressed

I WILL KNOW THIS CHANGE HAS OCCURRED WHEN:

- How can progress on this issue be measured?

INTRODUCTION

Organizing towards high-level federal commitments fighting HIV/AIDS

Galvanized by the Open Society Institute's report entitled *Improving Outcomes: Blueprint for a National AIDS Plan for the United States*,ⁱⁱ a small group of AIDS advocates launched the Coalition for a National AIDS Strategy in 2007. Their efforts inspired robust civil society engagement, increased HIV/AIDS awareness and discourse, and important political commitments from the Obama White House for the domestic fight against HIV/AIDS.

METHODS

Raising visibility and securing community and government support

Coalition members and supporters have engaged in a range of advocacy-related activities, including:

- Writing all presidential candidates in summer 2007 asking them to commit to creation of a Strategy, including a question on the strategy in the AIDS-related presidential candidate questionnaire
- Developing an online petition drive calling on the government to develop a Strategy that meets 7 key criteria, including target setting, greater coordination, priority setting, focus on where the epidemic is most acute, and engagement of people living with HIV/AIDS
- Outreach to print and broadcast media
- Stakeholder meetings with leading national advocates to map advocacy and build the Coalition
- Congressional lobbying to secure a special appropriation for White House planning and implementation of the Strategy
- Outreach and education to President Barack Obama's transition team and newly formed government, including AIDS policy officials
- Community stakeholder mobilization to prepare for White House input meetings held across the country (see work sheet, left)
- Numerous presentations at community forums
- Development of detailed recommendations and briefing documents for Strategy planners (see one example below)
- Ongoing personal contact with White House and other Administration staff
- Community engagement via an e-mail list and blog at <http://nationalaidstrategy.org>

RESULTS

Broad public and private support for development and implementation of a Strategy

Development of a National HIV/AIDS Strategy became President Barack Obama's flagship domestic HIV/AIDS policy initiative. The White House released its five-year Strategy in July 2010.ⁱⁱⁱ

CONCLUSIONS

Rallying around new approaches to improve outcomes can inspire public and private stakeholders

1. A push for more efficient government efforts to achieve better outcomes in the fight against HIV/AIDS can motivate advocates, media, and government decision-makers to take action
2. National advocacy and priority setting around a national plan can benefit from diverse opinions and perspectives and a multisectoral approach
3. Having an outcomes-oriented plan—with defined goals, objectives, metrics, and accountability mechanism—is just the beginning. Government leaders must implement the plans they develop with input and support from civil society. AIDS advocates must adequately monitor and support efforts to ensure that their best-laid plans are implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE KEY ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY (February 24, 2010)^{iv}

An independent group of advocates calls for a Strategy that addresses structural vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS and moves beyond the status quo in order to improve HIV-related outcomes in the US. The group's paper identifies the need for new resources, but also urges better targeting of resources, new approaches, and other reforms to use current and new financing more effectively. Their paper advances 4 fundamental recommendations for development of an effective and outcomes-oriented Strategy:

1. **Set a few ambitious, achievable targets:** To give the federal HIV/AIDS response focus, direction, and resolve, the Strategy must establish a limited number of specific and measurable targets to help build incremental progress toward the President's 3 goals: reducing HIV incidence, increase care access and improve care outcomes, and reduce HIV/AIDS-related health disparities.
2. **Improve federal management of HIV-related activities:** To ensure improved coordination and accountability, the Strategy must establish centralized management of the response.
3. **Describe priority activities:** The Strategy must identify high-yield activities and promote strategic allocation of resources (specific examples are provided).
4. **Prepare for implementation:** The White House must identify immediate action steps, responsible entities, and deadlines to begin realignment of HIV-related activities around the targets and priority activities of the Strategy. Without ongoing attention to implementation, the Strategy risks being ineffective.

i www.champnetwork.org/hiv-prevention-justice-alliance-documents.

ii www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/phw/articles_publications/publications/improving_20070430.

iii Access the Strategy at www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/onap.

iv Moving Beyond the Status Quo (<http://nationalaidstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/NHAS-framework-recommendation2010.pdf>).