



## **AIDS Foundation of Chicago Policy Recommendations for Mayor-Elect Rahm Emanuel**

The AIDS Foundation of Chicago (AFC) is looking forward to a strong partnership with the new mayoral administration in Chicago. In anticipation of this momentous change, AFC has highlighted four major areas that Mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel should emphasize to improve the City's response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

### **1. Effective City Government**

*The City must address structural inefficiencies of city government that have become barriers to providing HIV prevention and care services.*

#### *Short-Term Recommendations:*

- End the practice of furlough days
- Fill the dozens of vacant positions within the Chicago Department of Public Health's HIV/STD Division with proven public health experts
- Fill the vacancy of the Director of the Office of LGBT Health

#### *Long-Term Recommendations:*

- Partner with non-profit leadership to address the slow grant contracting and awards process
- Redesign the city's hiring process to avoid prolonged vacancies in the future
- Take a proactive approach in Washington and Springfield to ensure that Chicagoans receive their fair share of public health and human services funding
- Rely on the city's HIV non-profit experts to inform and deliver essential HIV services

### **2. Champion Public Health**

*For too many years Chicago has neglected its public health infrastructure, closing health centers and gutting funds for core public health services. We need to move forward, invest in health and increase collaboration with County and non-profit structures in place.*

#### *Short-Term Recommendations:*

- Recruit and retain nationally reputable public health leaders
- Ensure visible mayoral leadership in public health initiatives

- Maintain current housing units for people with HIV and restore 2009 cuts from city funding for this purpose
- Invest in a city-wide, coordinated media campaign to promote the use of male and female condoms

*Long-Term Recommendations:*

- Invest in core public health services, which is critical for health care reform implementation
- Promote greater leadership from City Hall on public health issues; consider creating a new position of “Surgeon General” for the City of Chicago
- Explore a county-city collaboration to improve public health and minimize duplicative service delivery systems
- Offer voluntary, confidential school-based HIV and STD testing at every public high school in Chicago, at least annually

### **3. Smart Spending**

*Money is tight, but the City must prioritize HIV/AIDS funding to maintain services and prevent future costs to the taxpayer in the form of increased HIV infection and hospitalization rates, and there are several ways to spend this funding efficiently. It should also look ahead to new opportunities to maximize state and federal dollars coming into the City.*

*Short-Term Recommendations:*

- Maintain City funding for the Office of LGBT Health and target resources to the populations at greatest risk, especially MSM of color
- Maintain current funding for HIV/AIDS prevention services
- Increase funding for syringe exchange programs, which are facing relentless budget cuts from the state

*Long-Term Recommendations:*

- Target funding proportional to the most impacted communities of our city, particularly to African Americans, Latinos, Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), transgender persons, youth, injection drug users (IDU) and the South and West sides of Chicago
- Coordinate closely with other community health efforts to minimize duplication
- Maximize revenue and leverage new opportunities available under national health care reform

### **4. Address Social Drivers of HIV**

*In order to maximize prevention efforts, the City should redouble its efforts to address the social drivers of HIV. Complicated societal influencers such as homophobia, transphobia, HIV-stigma, poverty and homelessness all add to the likelihood of HIV transmission: We cannot end AIDS without addressing these underlying issues.*

*Short-Term Recommendations:*

- Invest in a city-wide, coordinated media campaign to combat homophobia and HIV-stigma
- Make equal rights and protection of LGBT individuals a mandate for the next CEO of CPS and superintendent of police
- Mandate LGBT cultural competency training for all police, fire and school employees

*Long-Term Recommendations:*

- Fully implement the Illinois Safe Schools Act in Chicago schools and ensure that all principals and staff are creating a safe environment for LGBT youth
- Explore the possibility of an LGBT-inclusive magnet school
- Work with transgender community and the next superintendent of police to implement standardized guidelines for the humane treatment of transgender individuals in police custody
- Designate multi-year funding for housing coordination and increase city funding for the City's Plan to End Homelessness
- Designate city and/or federal funding for transgender cultural competency and job training and opportunities for transgender individuals