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 Contact: Linda H. Scruggs at lscruggs@rcg3.com or 202-299-7832

Black Women & the National HIV/AIDS Strategy: The Nation’s Progress in “Ending AIDS” on National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Since the earliest days of the AIDS epidemic, HIV and AIDS surveillance data have revealed that black women remain a disproportionately impacted demographic among women living in the United States. As we observe February 7th, National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NBHAAD), this fact remains true. Black women continue to have the highest incidence and prevalence of HIV diagnoses among women, including transgender women, and among heterosexuals (CDC HIV Fact Sheet, 2012). Black women of all ages account for 13.8% of the US female population yet accounted for 64% of all HIV diagnoses among women in 2012 (CDC, 2014).

So it is with this fact in mind that we score the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) at its five-year point. Utilizing the three of four goals of the NHAS, the 30 for 30 Campaign notes how well the nation is doing in terms of ending AIDS among black women:

Progress Towards Ending AIDS among Black Women Living in the United States

| NHAS GOALS* | INDICATORS OF PROGRESS | SCORE |
|--|--|----------|
| 1. Reduce new HIV infections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual number of new infections • Reduction in HIV transmission • Increase in knowledge of HIV status | + |
| 2. Increase access to care and improve health outcomes for PLHIV | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the proportion of newly diagnosed patients linked to care • Increase in the proportion of Ryan White program patients in continuous care • Increase in Ryan White program clients with permanent housing | — |
| 3. Reduce HIV-Related Health Disparities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to prevention and care • Increase the proportions of the NHAS three priority populations (MSM, African Americans & Latinos) with undetectable viral load | — |

*The fourth NHAS goal is to “Improve coordination and collaboration across federal agencies.”

We see from the table above that the nation is making progress. The Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS (PACHA) and the Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP) are to be commended for their work in starting to address some of the underlying factors that make women vulnerable to HIV, such as violence and trauma. With the exception of one proposed budget line item - the proposed consolidation of Ryan White Program Parts C and D - we are also grateful to the President for his continued support of the HIV community, as signified by increases in funding for HIV programs in his proposed FY 2016 Budget.

Yet, there is still much to do. As noted by C. Virginia Fields, Chair for the 30 for 30 Campaign Steering Committee: “Socio-economic hardships and gender-based inequalities are underlying social stressors that increase a woman’s chance of acquiring HIV, make it less likely she will know her status, and result in poorer medical outcomes. Let our country join in with the global community’s efforts to address gender-based inequities by *promoting and investing in gender equality and women’s empowerment* throughout the NHAS. It is time to make women, especially black women, a priority population in the NHAS.”

30 for 30 Campaign is a coordinating body of HIV and reproductive health organizations from every region of the country working to ensure that the unique needs of women living with and affected by HIV, including transgender women, are addressed in all relevant HIV funding, programs, and policies.