

Four priorities set for New Haven HIV/AIDS policy

Medicine and housing issues top the list of policy priorities identified by the Mayor's Task Force on AIDS this year. Key HIV/AIDS priorities this year include:

- ▼ Increasing state funds for
- ▼ Covering a \$ million shortfall in the HOPWA housing program for people with AIDS.
- ▼ Repealing an onerous \$1 per prescription co-pay imposed upon Medicaid patients.
- ▼ Improving the needle exchange program.

CDAP Program merits increase to \$2.8 million

The CDAP Program buys medicine for people with HIV/AIDS. The predicted shortfall for FY98 IS NOW \$699,033 (that's up from the previous state estimate of \$739,255). The new projected shortfall for next year is \$722,138, (old estimate \$145,333). To provide adequate funds for CDAP, the General Assembly should approve a budget of \$2830,700 for next year.

In the past, they have covered CDAP shortfalls with money from Ryan White Title I and Title II Programs. But these funds are needed to meet other needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

“The Department of Social Services cannot rely on Title I Program in New Haven and Hartford to fill in any shortfall of funds. If the State does not increase its financial

support, we may well see those who rely on these new medications for survival turned away," warned Thomas Butcher, Project Director for Ryan White Title I New Haven.

\$720,500 needed for Housing

We need the Appropriations Committee to add \$720,500 to the state budget line for "Residences for Persons with AIDS." This money will:

- ◆ Cover the loss of \$325,290 in funds to AIDS housing programs in New Haven and Hartford.
- ◆ Continue \$228,006 of special project funds that would otherwise end. At stake are 50 units of housing for individuals and families with HIV/AIDS.
- ◆ Provide a 2.1 percent cost of living increase.

Medicaid \$1 Prescription Co-pay

Repeal of this measure appears to be moving through the General Assembly, (see related story page _).

Needle Exchange Program Improvements

The current legislative session is called the "short" session and is supposed to focus only on financial matters. Policy issues - like those involved in needle exchange programs - are supposed to be discussed during the "long" session next year. But Task Force members have already begun to build a foundation for change in 1999.

Specifically, lawmakers should revise state law to:

- ▼ Permit health departments to accept more than 10 needles from one person at a time.
- ▼ Permit health officials to distribute "starter kits."