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News Release

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HIV/AIDS Treatment and Care Program Reaches Capacity

Utah Department of Health forced to suspend applications for services

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Department of Health’s (UDOH) HIV/AIDS Treatment and Care Program has stopped accepting new applications for the Ryan White AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP), Support Services Program and the Health Insurance Continuation Program. Health officials say due to an increased caseload of those who are eligible, increases in drug costs, increases in health insurance premiums, and reduced federal funding, the program cannot afford to accept additional clients and actually needs as much as \$375,000 just to maintain services to existing patients at the current level.

The number of people living with HIV/AIDS is increasing. Due to advances in drug treatment, those who are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS are living longer and needing services longer. There are currently 2,290 people living with HIV/AIDS in Utah. About 600 are enrolled for some level of Utah’s Ryan White Part B Program services. Services include purchasing medications, paying health insurance premiums, and support services for the uninsured and the underinsured.

“The ongoing goal of these programs is to provide early treatment to extend and improve the lives of those living with HIV/AIDS,” says Jennifer Brown, Director, Bureau of Epidemiology, UDOH, “We have had a strong commitment to serving the needs of this population for the past 19 years and continue to have a strong commitment. It is unfortunate there is not enough money to serve everyone. If we take new clients and continue to serve existing clients we will run out of money before March 2010 and then we won’t be able to serve anyone.”

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These patient services are paid for by a \$4.2 million dollar grant from the federal Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) and the current funding cycle ends in March 2010. The UDOH has reviewed cost-cutting recommendations from the AIDS Drug Assistance Program Advisory Committee, local health care experts, and community advocates for those living with HIV/AIDS. UDOH is also lowering the eligibility requirements to 250% of the Federal Poverty Level for those who are currently enrolled in the program. As a result, services for 99 clients will be discontinued. Utah is also discontinuing dental and mental health services for these clients.

This situation is not unique to Utah. Seven states have been forced to close enrollment to new clients and six more states are anticipating new and/or additional restrictions to their AIDS Drug Assistance Programs.

Clients who currently receive these services and have questions should call their case manager. Those who are unable to access medications may be referred to a prescription drug manufacturer's free or reduced price program.

“These are tough decisions but ones that need to be made. The Program needs to be fiscally responsible in order to keep running,” said “Kristen Ries, M.D., Professor of Internal Medicine, University of Utah Medical Center, and member of the ADAP Advisory Committee.

For other HIV/AIDS data and fact sheets on HIV and AIDS, visit the UDOH website at: <http://www.health.utah.gov/cdc/>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.