

AIDS Services Organizations
FY 2023 Budget Testimony - House and Senate Appropriations Committee
February 9, 2022

The funding for HIV/AIDS services and prevention have not increased in many years. Due to the pandemic and other rising needs, we need to request more funds in order to adequately serve our clients. We also support the requests that will be coming your way by the HIV/AIDS Comprehensive Care Clinic, as well as the request from Safe Recovery for substance use prevention funding. We have included suggested budget language to support our request.

HIV/AIDS Services Funding

We are requesting *an additional \$390,000* for Services Funding.

- Vermont Cares - \$140,000
Last year, we experienced an increase in new HIV+ clients in Vermont. As a result, we must enhance our case management to focus on client care and housing support. We also opened another office in Barre which requires adequate staffing and client support.
- AIDS Project of Southern Vermont - \$100,000
We are requesting additional funds to recruit and retain case management staff and provide direct financial assistance to our clients to help them maintain stable housing and access to nutritious food.
- HIV/HCV Resource Center - \$55,000
Many of our clients have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 through the loss of jobs, while the cost of housing continues to increase. Funding will support financial assistance to maintain stable housing and pay bills, and salary and benefit increases.
- Twin States Network – \$95,000
Many of our clients have experienced an intense sense of isolation due to the pandemic. Funding will include retreats and support for our Health and Wellness fund

HIV Prevention Funding

We are requesting *an additional \$360,000* for prevention funding. During the past 2 years of the pandemic, our syringe service programs have been growing tremendously. In most parts of the state, we are providing services on demand throughout the day. We are distributing more sterile injection equipment, naloxone, and overdose prevention kits than ever before. Due to an anticipated 400+ new intakes and the cost of sterile injection equipment skyrocketing, our prior funding will not keep pace.

HIV Prevention Funding request - \$360,000

- **Vermont CARES: \$140,000**
- **AIDS Project of Southern Vermont: 110,000**
- **HIV/HCV Resource Center request: \$110,000**

Proposed HIV/AIDS FY 2023 Budget Language

The following is our proposed language for the FY 2023 budget. The underlined and bold language shows proposed additional language to that proposed by the Governor's recommended language.

Sec. E.312 HEALTH – PUBLIC HEALTH

(1) In fiscal year 2023, a total of \$865,000 shall be appropriated for HIV/AIDS service funding. As part of this appropriation, the Department of Health shall provide grants in the amount of \$475,000 in AIDS Medication Rebates special funds to the Vermont AIDS service and peer-support organizations for client-based support services. The funds shall be allocated according to an RFP process. If there are insufficient AIDS Medication Rebates, general funds shall be used to meet this appropriation. In addition, \$390,000 in general funds shall also be appropriated to the following organizations for client-based support services:

Vermont CARES \$140,000

AIDS Project of Southern Vermont \$100,000

HIV/HCV Resource Center \$55,000

Twin States Network \$95,000

The Department of Health AIDS Program shall meet at least quarterly with the Community Advisory Group (CAG) with current information and data relating to service initiatives.

(2) Ryan White Title II funds for AIDS services and the Vermont Medication Assistance Program. (VMAP) shall be distributed in accordance with federal guidelines. The federal guidelines shall not apply to programs or services funded solely by State general funds.

(A) The Secretary of Human Services shall immediately notify the Joint Fiscal Committee if at any time there are insufficient funds in VMAP to assist all eligible individuals. The Secretary shall work in collaboration with persons living with HIV/AIDS to develop a plan to continue access to VMAP medications until such time as the General Assembly can take action.

(B) As provided in this section, the Secretary of Human Services shall work in collaboration with the VMAP Advisory Committee, which shall be composed of not less than 50 percent of members who are living with HIV/AIDS. If a modification to the program's eligibility requirements or benefit coverage is considered, the Committee shall make recommendations regarding the program's formulary of approved medication, related laboratory testing, nutritional supplements, and eligibility for the program.

(3) In fiscal year 2023, the Department of Health shall provide grants in the amount of \$100,000 in general funds to Vermont AIDS service organizations and other Vermont HIV/AIDS prevention providers for community-based HIV prevention programs and services. These funds shall be used for HIV/AIDS prevention purposes, including syringe exchange programs; improving the availability of confidential and anonymous HIV testing; prevention work with at-risk groups such as women, intravenous drug users, and people of color; and anti-stigma campaigns. Not more than 15 percent of the funds may be used for the administration of such services by the recipients of these funds. The method by which these prevention funds are distributed shall be determined by mutual agreement of the Department of Health and the Vermont AIDS service organizations and other Vermont HIV/AIDS prevention providers.

(4) **(A)** In fiscal year 2023, the Department of Health shall provide grants in the amount of \$150,000 in general funds to Vermont AIDS service organizations and other Vermont

HIV/AIDS prevention providers for syringe exchange programs. The method by which these prevention funds are distributed shall be determined by mutual agreement of the Department of Health, the Vermont AIDS service organizations, and other Vermont HIV/AIDS prevention providers. The performance period for these grants will be State fiscal year 2023. Grant reporting shall include outcomes and results.

(B) In fiscal year 2023, the Department of Health shall provide additional grants in the amount of \$360,000 in general funds for syringe exchange services to be allocated as follows:

Vermont CARES \$140,000

AIDS Project of Southern Vermont \$110,000

HIV/HCV Resource Center \$110,000

(5) In fiscal year 2023, the Department of Health shall not reduce any grants to the Vermont AIDS service and peer-support organizations from funds appropriated for HIV/AIDS services to levels below those in fiscal year 2020 without receiving prior approval from the Joint Fiscal Committee.