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to my community.

## Ryan White Services: a Transition to Long-term Services

The Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act has undergone significant changes in philosophy and focus with the 2006 reauthorization. The new act, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Treatment Modernization Act, reflects a shift in focus from AIDS to the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, the name change reflects a new level of understanding of Congress that the epidemic has become highly treatable with new and improved medications. The belief is that individuals with HIV/AIDS, with proper treatment and disease management, can live a full, active life.

The PLWH/A (People Living with HIV/AIDS) committee of the Greater Baltimore HIV Health Services Planning Council believes that there must be a shift in the approach to planning, providing and receiving HIV-related services to meet the changing epidemic and Congress's response to it. This committee is concerned about the number of consumers who utilize Ryan White services for long-term treatment instead of short-term emergency treatment as intended. The fact that PLWH/As are now, more than ever, able to live full and active lives with proper management illustrates that it is crucial for: (1) consumers to develop a greater understanding of Ryan White services, non-Ryan White resources and their personal resources to address their health problems; (2) providers to rethink their approach to treatment service provisions and the use of other community resources, and (3) the planning council to rethink its approach to planning for services to the HIV community.

The reauthorized Treatment Modernization Act requires the planning council to think about HIV services differently. With limited resources and ever changing demands on grant funds, planners, providers and, most of all, consumers must operate under the premise that Ryan White services are for short term, emergency assistance- a payment of last resort. Allowing and planning for consumers to utilize Ryan White services for extended periods not only depletes resources, but ultimately impacts the number of people providers are able to serve.

Establishing a working relationship between providers and consumers is key to implementing the PLWH/A committee's vision of self-sufficient consumers who are able to manage their own health care successfully. Providers play a vital role in establishing this partnership with consumers. No more is it the provider's responsibility to do everything for the consumer, as the life expectancy for PLWH/As undergoing treatment is far greater than that of 20 years ago. To do so would only work to add to providers' case-loads and make the system inefficient. Consumers must therefore enter into the process expecting Ryan White to address only their short-term, emergency needs and to transition into long-term services as quickly as possible, thereby creating room for new Ryan White clients. The provider and consumer must work to establish a partnership that utilizes the providers' pool of resources as well as the self-management resources of the consumers. This emphasizes to consumers that providers are not there to take on their burden, but to work with them, and together, create a plan that assists consumers in their process to more fully manager their care. It is the responsibility of the PLWH/A committee, planning council and providers to help consumers understand the importance of transitioning off Ryan White services and into entitlements and other long-term services. It is also our responsibility to stress to consumers the significance of working, as a partner, with their providers to develop the tools needed to take greater control of their treatment.

In closing, changing the mindsets of planners, consumers, providers and all stakeholders in their approach to Ryan White services will ultimately lead to a stronger, more effective care system that delivers quality services using both Ryan White funds and other resources for the ongoing care of HIV-positive individuals.

