



I care about what happens to my community.

Ryan White as the Ultimate System of Comprehensive Care

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention lists chronic diseases among the most prevalent and costly of all health problems. Similar to HIV and AIDS, chronic diseases have a debilitating effect on all aspects of an infected or affected individuals life. Without a health care system that takes a comprehensive approach to health and wellness, many suffering from devastating chronic diseases are unable to properly manage their illnesses and live stable lives. The Ryan White program encompasses all aspects of a patient’s life and is essential to ensure treatment and provide support services for all those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The Ryan White continuum of care serves as a safety net for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH/A) who could not otherwise afford needed medical and ancillary services for their HIV/AIDS treatment. PLWH/As often suffer from multiple chronic diseases simultaneously due to the effects of HIV and the potency of medications used for treatment. Given the complexity of managing care for PLWH/As, a comprehensive system of care is vital. Recognizing this need, Ryan White provides supportive services in addition to key medical services that facilitate access and availability to care as well as adherence to treatment and maintenance of all health care needs. This ideal continuum of care not only treats the illness, it treats the person by addressing the needs that could otherwise pose as a barrier to medical care. Ryan White guarantees coverage to emergency services related to treating HIV and AIDS, regardless of the consumer’s ability to pay.

Not only does Ryan White ensure all emergency services and expenses, the program also acts as a stabilizer. Ryan White empowers consumers to self-manage their disease and lead a normal and productive life. Ryan White recognizes that systemic factors play a major role in a patient’s ability to succeed in treatment and recovery. Co-morbid conditions of substance abuse and mental health along with social needs like short-term housing and transportation affect the consumer’s ability to seek treatment, become stable and work towards maintaining their independence. The resulting productivity improves consumer quality of life allowing them to transition onto long-term services and allowing those newly entering treatment to access Ryan White services.

The ultimate goal of any health care system must be to treat the disease with core medical services while also empowering the consumer to enjoy a stable quality of life. Ryan White achieves this by working to improve consumer access to care and increase quality of life. The systemic factors that play a major role in affecting PLWH/A’s correlate to the barriers that people suffering from other chronic diseases face. Ryan White acknowledges these factors and treats both the person and the disease. This form of comprehensive care should be a model for all health care systems.