

Ohio Department of Health Announces Major Changes to Ohio's Ryan White Program

Background Information

In early July, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) announced changes to the Ryan White program, which provides assistance to eligible Ohioans living with HIV/AIDS. The changes are being implemented because of a combination of decreasing resources and increasing enrollment, costs of health insurance premiums and medications. These changes will impact current and potential future clients, and are designed to maintain core services for those most in need, both financially and medically.

Nationally, many Ryan White programs have felt the same impact with a record number of people on waiting lists due to increasing enrollment, combined with increased costs of medications. Ohio will join a dozen other states that have initiated a waiting list for this program. ODH staff will be working as closely as possible with case managers and clients to help those affected in identifying other resources, including patient assistance programs.

Some strategies being used include implementing a waiting list, reducing the number of approved medications available to clients (drug formulary), aggressive pursuit of rebates, revising eligibility requirements and eliminating some services. Changes to the program include:

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria will take into account a combination of both financial and medical need. After the financial assessment, the controlling factor will be based on the results of medical tests, to provide services to the most vulnerable clients. Clients who meet the criteria for medical exceptions may be enrolled.

All Ohioans diagnosed with HIV, regardless of income level, will be eligible for Ryan White case management services such as assistance in applying for patient assistance programs.

Existing clients, who are specifically impacted by financial eligibility changes effective July 1, will be notified and given the opportunity to provide updated financial documents within 30 days.

New program applicants above 300 percent federal poverty level will not be eligible for HIV medications from the Ryan White program. Case managers will assist them in applying for Patient Assistance programs sponsored by the pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Client eligibility will be reviewed every six months for access to medications.

Implementation of a Waiting List for New applicants

New potential clients at 300 percent poverty level and below, applying to the program, will be prioritized based on medical eligibility, effective July 1. Applicants who do not meet medical eligibility criteria will be placed on a waiting list.

Change in Drug Formulary

The revised formulary will still exceed national public health service guidelines for HIV care.

All currently available antiretroviral agents will remain on the formulary.

Medications removed from the formulary, for health problems including cardiac conditions, management of diabetes, management of acid reflux and diarrhea, while clearly important in the care of all clients, were removed to preserve resources to pay for HIV medications.

Other Program Reductions

- Elimination of non-core services (e.g. housing, utilities, transportation, nutrition).
- Reduction of dental services except for emergencies.
- Reductions in internal ODH funding.

ODH staff will continue to work with people impacted by these changes and everyone involved in the care network to answer questions and provide options as much as possible.

Information is being shared with case managers, providers and clients and additional details and specific guidance will be provided as they become available.

In addition, ODH and stakeholders continue to aggressively pursue public and private partnerships to help ensure the long-term sustainability of the program.