

# PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HIV/AIDS

April 30, 2000

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The Honorable Donna Shalala  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Shalala:

Thank you for forwarding the Council your response to Congress member Pelosi's request for an update on the scientific literature related to needle exchange. We remain committed to emphasizing the importance of this public health intervention as part of a comprehensive HIV prevention strategy. To realize our mutual goal of effective HIV prevention, it is vital that we continue to identify and evaluate sound public health strategies to address the twin epidemics of HIV and substance abuse.

As we discussed in our meeting subsequent to the October 1999 meeting, we are interested in the actual strategy that will be employed by HHS to disseminate the "street-level" guide on the science of needle exchange programs. More specifically, we would like an update on the development of the following:

- The actual content and format of the document;
- The targeted audience including members of Congress, state officials, and appropriate community groups; and
- The timeline for dissemination.

Equally important is ensuring that there is sufficient elevation of the "street-guide" guide to counter the continued negative press on needle exchange and to strengthen the link between research and policy. We urge you to submit editorials regarding the science-based efficacy of syringe exchange programs and release a joint press statement with other agency experts commenting on federal policies, the scientific validity of syringe exchange programs, and public health implications.

As the debate over needle exchange continues throughout the country, wide dissemination of completed and ongoing research on the efficacy of syringe exchange programs in reducing HIV transmission and their impact of illegal drug use becomes timely and important. It is critical for national, regional, state, and local use. It is our hope that such dissemination will aid these localities in making sound policy decisions within their jurisdictions, based on science that is consistent with these recent findings. For your reference we have included a list of organizations and individuals that we would like to receive this information. We thank you for honoring this request.

Sincerely,

Ronald V. Dellums  
Chair

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