



Ryan White Part D Funding: What about Women and Families?

On March 4, 2014 President Obama released his [proposed budget for FY 2015](#). While his budget doesn't go into effect without congressional approval, and it's unlikely that congress will approve it without making any changes—the President made an important change in the way HIV related services are funded. The proposed budget condenses Part D of the [Ryan White Program](#) (which focuses on providing supportive services and medical services to women and families) into Part C (which provides comprehensive services without a focus on any specific group impacted by HIV/AIDS).

This proposal isn't itself particularly concerning—Part D funds have always been very competitive and difficult to compete for so the compression of Part D into Part C may open up some new funding opportunities for community-based organizations (CBOs) that had been previously shut out of Part D funding. It also makes sense from the standpoint that there are less children being born with HIV and therefore a reduced need for funding those targeted services.

But we can't forget about women and families.

The real concern with this proposal is the small part it plays in a larger movement in HIV/AIDS advocacy and funding that increasingly forgets about women and families and their unique needs and barriers. Language matters. Even though there are no funds being diverted out of the Ryan White program, removing “women and families” sends a problematic message about the focus of HIV/AIDS advocacy and services, who is living with HIV, and what their needs are. It lumps everyone living with HIV/AIDS into the same boat when they have distinctly different and complex needs—for women and families, those needs are often ignored.

There's an argument that women and families served by Part D of the Ryan White program can get those same services through providers that receive Part C funding. That's technically true. But those providers often don't have woman-focused or youth-focused services that we know are effective. Women and youth may have a more difficult time articulating their needs and getting those needs met. As a woman-focused CBO, we have a first-hand view of what those needs are. Women aren't just looking for access to quality health care or treatment. They're looking for food so they can feed their families; housing so they can provide their families with stability and safety; employment so they can feel empowered to take care of themselves and their families; childcare so they can get to doctor's appointments and to work; education so they can better themselves and set a good example for their families...

The needs of women go well beyond just taking medicine and adhering to treatment. As we lose focus on women and their needs, we are making it more difficult for them and families to enter and stay in care. The Women's Collective urges the President and Congress to ensure that in the fight against HIV/AIDS, women are not left behind.