



Rockville MD 20857

HIV/AIDS Bureau

APR 3 2008

José F. Colón
C-1 Ronda Street
Villa Andalucía
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00926

Dear Mr. Colón:

The Secretary has asked me to thank you for your letter regarding issues facing persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH/A) in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and to respond directly to you on his behalf. The HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB), within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Agency responsible for administering the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program, is aware of many of the issues you cited in your correspondence.

HAB has been working diligently over the past 2 years to address many of the problems regarding the management of Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Grant funds by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the Municipality of San Juan.

In an attempt to improve the management of the Part A Grant to the Municipality of San Juan and the Part B Grant to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, HRSA has recommended that each employ, through a contract, a fiscal intermediary who would be responsible to manage and supervise many of the programmatic and administrative functions that continue to plague the grantees. While the Municipality of San Juan has refused to consider this recommendation, the Commonwealth has indicated that it is considering the use of a Pharmacy Benefits Manager to oversee the management of its pharmaceutical services.

Additionally, over the past 24 months, HRSA staff with the assistance of external consultants, has provided on-site and conference call technical assistance to the Part A and Part B Grantees in Puerto Rico. HRSA staff conducted a program monitoring site visit for the Part A Grantee, at the Municipality of San Juan, in December 2007, and an

administrative and fiscal monitoring site visit of the Part B Grantee, at the Puerto Rico Department of Health, in August, and December 2007. HRSA representatives recently conducted a site visit in February to educate Part B staff on the application of best practices in contract monitoring and fiscal responsibility for one of the contracted consortia sites.

HRSA continues to impose restricted drawdown procedures for Part A and Part B Grantees. In February, HRSA assigned a new project officer (PO) to oversee all Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Grantees in the Commonwealth, including those funded under Parts A, B, C, and D. The PO's priorities include monitoring grantee progress in the implementation of corrective measures, improving program compliance, and ensuring continued and sustained access to services for PLWH/A in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

These are just a few examples of the many actions which HAB/HRSA have taken and will continue to take in an effort to improve overall grantee compliance with the requirements of the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program. HRSA continues to collaborate with other Federal agencies that are also experiencing similar issues with regards to the administration of grant programs in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

HAB understands and shares your deep concern and frustration with the challenges of the care and treatment systems. We are committed to continue to work diligently to resolve problems in an effort to improve access to quality care and treatment services for PLWH/A disease in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,



Deborah Parham Hopson, Ph.D., R.N.
Assistant Surgeon General
Associate Administrator