

October 11, 1995

## **U.S. Wants AIDS Care Detailed in H.M.O. Shift**

By ESTHER B. FEIN

Federal health officials say New York City must be more specific about how it will protect the needs of people with H.I.V. or AIDS before the Government will approve the city's request to make managed care mandatory for most Medicaid recipients.

Officials at the Health Care Financing Administration, which is considering the city's application, said last week that the agency was not ready to act on the request. A decision is expected by Oct. 31.

Among the problems, said Kathy Buto, associate administrator for policy at the health care agency, is that "we need more specificity on this issue," referring to the status of people with H.I.V. or AIDS.

"Before a plan can be approved or operate, we have to make sure that the network is adequate for everyone's needs or that there are carve-outs for specific populations," Ms. Buto said.

Maria K. Mitchell, special adviser to Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani for health policy, said last week that anyone with a chronic health problem would be exempt from the city's proposal to shift Medicaid recipients into managed care and that people with H.I.V. or AIDS were included. She spoke in response to a report that a new survey showed that the city's managed care network for people on Medicaid was not prepared to deal with people with H.I.V. and AIDS.

Ms. Mitchell said on Friday that she "can't at this time anticipate any problem" if Federal officials should require that the city's plan include a specific exemption for people with AIDS or H.I.V. She noted that the current proposal did not specifically mention any chronic ailments.

The report, by the Women's Advocacy Group of Housing Works, a nonprofit group serving people with H.I.V. and AIDS, found that 95 percent of Medicaid managed-care plans in the city could not refer callers to a primary care doctor experienced in treating people with the virus.

About 25,000 New Yorkers with H.I.V. or AIDS, most of them women and children, would be forced into health maintenance organizations if the Federal Health Care Financing Administration grants New

York City's request for permission to make managed care mandatory for nearly all its Medicaid recipients. The 25,000 represent nearly 20 percent of the 136,000 people in New York that state officials estimate have AIDS or H.I.V.

Advocates for H.I.V.-positive people and health care workers who treat them said the survey showed dangerous lapses in the Medicaid managed-care network for New Yorkers infected with the virus. They urged the city to exempt these patients from any plan making managed care mandatory for Medicaid recipients.

The advocates also said the city's program for informing people on Medicaid about their rights was so weak that many people with the virus were being told erroneously that they would have to sign up for such a managed care plan, although the city's application has not been acted upon and the program is mandatory only in a demonstration area in southwest Brooklyn.

"People with H.I.V. and AIDS need to know that they can get the care they need from providers with experience from the moment they are diagnosed," said Michael Kink, Housing Works' senior staff lawyer. "This needs to be spelled out in any proposed plan so that there are no questions of what exactly the policy is."

Ms. Mitchell said that she had not seen the Housing Works survey and that the city itself had never evaluated whether the current Medicaid managed-care plans operating in the city had doctors experienced in diagnosing and treating the disease.

But she said plans being discussed now for expanding the program included requiring health care companies to have "an adequate network of physicians with an expertise in dealing with H.I.V. and AIDS."

- [Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#)
- [Home](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [XML](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Work for Us](#)
- [Back to Top](#)