

## NACCHO Announces New Initiative to Address Disparities in HIV Outcomes Among Minority Populations in the South

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) in partnership with Cicatelli Associates, Inc. (CAI), is pleased to announce the launch of the Southern Initiative, a project which aims to improve HIV outcomes among minority populations in the Southern United States. This three-year initiative is supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary's Minority AIDS Initiative Fund, and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration, HIV/AIDS Bureau, Division of Metropolitan HIV/AIDS Programs.

The Southern Initiative will focus on four Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program Part A jurisdictions: Atlanta, Houston, Memphis, and New Orleans. One organization in each jurisdiction will receive funding and technical assistance to implement innovative and evidence-based interventions aimed at improving outcomes across the HIV care continuum, and reducing disparities among minority populations, particularly men who have sex with men (MSM), youth, cisgender and transgender women, and people who inject drugs. In alignment with the National HIV/AIDS Strategy, interventions will focus on establishing systems to seamlessly link people to care immediately after HIV diagnosis, and support retention in care to achieve viral suppression. For those who test negative, interventions will support prevention counseling and planning, including PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis.

The South bears a disproportionate burden – over 50% – of newly diagnosed cases of HIV. In addition, outcomes along the HIV care continuum are among the lowest in the country, and disparities among minority populations are particularly pronounced. For example, African Americans are severely affected by HIV in the South. Black MSM face an especially heavy burden, accounting for 59% of all HIV diagnoses among African Americans in the South, and black women account for 69% of all HIV diagnoses among women in the South.

"Health disparities among our minority communities is a public health problem that must be addressed," said NACCHO Executive Director LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH. Organizations will participate in NACCHO's acclaimed *Roots of Health Inequity* course to increase awareness of the health inequities and social injustices which impact the health outcomes of minority populations. New knowledge, insights, and awareness attained through participation in the course will help build organizations' capacity to engage and serve minority populations, and address the social, structural, economic, and environmental issues that impact the implementation and success of clinical and behavioral interventions to improve HIV outcomes. "We're committed to working with NACCHO to lend our expertise and assist providers to successfully address health disparities in HIV in the South," said Barbara Cicatelli, CAI's President and Founder.

NACCHO and CAI will work closely with each jurisdiction's Ryan White Part A program and local health department to achieve the goals of the Southern Initiative. Close collaboration with local HIV prevention and care programs will ensure that the efforts of the Southern Initiative are integrated into the local HIV services infrastructure and sustainable beyond the project period. Successful interventions and lessons learned through this initiative will be shared broadly to support the improvement of HIV outcomes among minority populations across the Southern U.S., as well as throughout the country.

For more information about the Southern Initiative, please contact Nicholas Parr at [nparr@naccho.org](mailto:nparr@naccho.org).

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### **About NACCHO**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org).

### **About CAI**

CAI is a global nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of underserved populations worldwide. For more than 35 years CAI has provided customized capacity building services to health and human service organizations in more than 27 countries and in all 50 states. Offering more than 1,500 training programs annually, CAI's passionate staff works to fulfill its mission: to use the transformative power of education and research to foster a more aware, healthy, compassionate and equitable world. For more information about CAI, please visit [www.caiglobal.org](http://www.caiglobal.org).

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This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary's Minority AIDS Initiative Fund (SMAIF) and administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), HIV/AIDS Bureau (HAB), Division of Metropolitan HIV/AIDS Programs (DMHAP).