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Obama to Outline Plan to Cut H.I.V. Infections

By **ROBERT PEAR**

WASHINGTON — President Obama will unveil a new national strategy this week to curb the AIDS epidemic by slashing the number of new infections and increasing the number of people who get care and treatment.

“Annual AIDS deaths have declined, but the number of new infections has been static and the number of people living with H.I.V. is growing,” says a final draft of the report, obtained by The New York Times.

In the report, the administration calls for steps to reduce the annual number of new H.I.V. infections by 25 percent within five years. “Approximately 56,000 people become infected each year, and more than 1.1 million Americans are living with H.I.V.,” the report says.

Mr. Obama plans to announce the strategy, distilled from 15 months of work and discussions with thousands of people around the country, at the White House on Tuesday.

While acknowledging that “increased investments in certain key areas are warranted,” the report does not propose a major increase in federal spending. It says the administration will redirect money to areas with the greatest need and population groups at greatest risk, including gay and bisexual men and African-Americans. The federal government now spends more than \$19 billion a year on domestic AIDS programs.

On average, the report says, one person is newly infected with H.I.V. every nine and a half minutes, but tens of thousands of people with the virus are not receiving any care. If they got care, the report says, they could prolong their own lives and reduce the spread of the virus to others. By 2015 the report says, the United States should “increase the proportion of newly diagnosed patients linked to clinical care within three months of their H.I.V. diagnosis to 85 percent,” from the current 65 percent.

The first-ever national AIDS strategy has been in the works since the start of the administration. It comes in the context of growing frustrations expressed by some gay rights groups. They say that more money is urgently needed for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program, and they assert that the

White House has not done enough to secure repeal of the law banning military service by people who are openly gay or bisexual.

The report tries to revive the sense of urgency that gripped the nation in the first years after discovery of the virus that causes AIDS. “Public attention to the H.I.V. epidemic has waned,” the report says. “Because H.I.V. is treatable, many people now think that it is no longer a public health emergency.”

The report calls for “a more coordinated national response to the H.I.V. epidemic” and lays out specific steps to be taken by various federal agencies.

Mr. Obama offers a compliment to President [George W. Bush](#), who made progress against AIDS in Africa by setting clear goals and holding people accountable.

The program begun by Mr. Bush, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, “has taught us valuable lessons about fighting H.I.V. and scaling up efforts around the world that can be applied to the domestic epidemic,” the report says.

Mr. Obama’s strategy is generally consistent with policies recommended by public health specialists and advocates for people with H.I.V. But some experts had called for higher goals, more aggressive timetables and more spending on prevention and treatment.

The report makes these points:

¶Far too many people infected with H.I.V. are unaware of their status and may unknowingly transmit the virus to their partners. By 2015, the proportion of people with H.I.V. who know of their condition should be increased to 90 percent, from 79 percent today.

¶The new health care law will significantly expand access to care for people with H.I.V., but federal efforts like the Ryan White program will still be needed to fill gaps in services.

¶Federal spending on H.I.V. testing and prevention does not match the need. States with the lowest numbers of H.I.V./AIDS cases often receive the most money per case. The federal government should allocate more of the money to states with the highest “burden of disease.”

¶Health officials must devote “more attention and resources” to gay and bisexual men, who account for slightly more than half of new infections each year, and African-Americans, who account for 46 percent of people living with H.I.V.

¶The H.I.V. transmission rate, which indicates how fast the epidemic is spreading, should be reduced by 30 percent in five years. At the current rate, about 5 of every 100 people with H.I.V.

transmit the virus to someone in a given year.

If the transmission rate is unchanged, the report says, “within a decade, the number of new infections would increase to more than 75,000 per year and the number of people living with H.I.V. would grow to more than 1.5 million.”

The report finds that persistent discrimination against people with H.I.V. is a major barrier to progress in fighting the disease.

“The stigma associated with H.I.V. remains extremely high,” it says. “People living with H.I.V. may still face discrimination in many areas of life, including employment, housing, provision of health care services and access to public accommodations.”

The administration promises to “strengthen enforcement of civil rights laws” protecting people with H.I.V.

One political challenge for the administration is to win broad public support for a campaign that will focus more narrowly on specific groups and communities at high risk for H.I.V. infection.

“Just as we mobilize the country to support [cancer](#) research whether or not we believe that we are at high risk of cancer and we support public education whether or not we have children,” the report says, “fighting H.I.V. requires widespread public support to sustain a long-term effort.”



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