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HHS ANNOUNCES THREE SITES FOR SPECIAL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS TO BATTLE HIV/AIDS IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala today announced that Detroit, Philadelphia and Miami will be the first of 11 U.S. metropolitan areas to receive special technical assistance from federal teams of experts to help combat the spread of HIV/AIDS among racial and ethnic minority populations.

Beginning this month, HHS will send special teams of experts known as Crisis Response Teams into the three cities for eight to 10 weeks. The Crisis Response Teams will meet with local officials, public health personnel and community-based organizations that work with racial and ethnic minority persons living with HIV/AIDS and help them develop targeted strategies to curb the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS among minority populations in their communities.

"We're going into these communities at their invitation as partners to offer our assistance and expertise," said Secretary Shalala. "Our interest is in helping people who are already getting good results in tough situations do even better. Further targeting our interventions could save lives."

This effort is part of an HHS joint venture with the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and other members of Congress to combat the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS in African-American, Hispanic and other racial and ethnic minority communities. In October 1998, the Clinton Administration committed \$156 million in additional resources to combat HIV/AIDS in racial and ethnic minority communities hardest hit by this disease. Crisis Response Teams are an integral part of that effort.

"Each community is different. But the vast experience among Crisis Response Team members in dealing with HIV/AIDS at the local level should help the various communities identify challenges and tap into their own unique resources," said Surgeon General David Satcher. "Together, we can target the best approach for reaching their respective minority groups who have HIV/AIDS."

HHS targeted cities with the largest minority populations affected by HIV/AIDS. To be eligible for this assistance, cities had to have populations of at least 500,000 persons and at least 1,500 African-American or Hispanic persons living with HIV/AIDS. Also, these minority groups had to account for at least 50 percent of the community's HIV/AIDS cases. Once a city qualified under these criteria, the chief elected official in that community had to request that HHS dispatch a Crisis Response Team.

Other communities currently scheduled to receive help from Crisis Response Teams include Atlanta; Baltimore; Chicago; Los Angeles; New Haven/Bridgeport/Danbury/Waterbury, Conn.; Newark, N.J.; Washington, D.C.; and West Palm Beach/Boca Raton, Fla.

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The teams' overall goal is to reduce HIV/AIDS morbidity and mortality among minorities. Following their intensive work with each locality, the teams will work in partnership with the local community to produce a final report with an assessment of the local epidemic among minorities, including endemic local challenges and targeted strategic advice in the form of an action plan.

Crisis Response Teams will be comprised of experts from HHS' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Health Resources and Services Administration, the National Institutes of Health, and the HHS Office of HIV/AIDS Policy.

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Note: HHS press releases are available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.hhs.gov>.