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## ADAP Advocacy Association Launches Transgender Health Project

### *Improving Access to Care Among Transgender Men & Women Living with HIV/AIDS under the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP)*

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (August 3, 2016) – The [ADAP Advocacy Association](http://ADAP Advocacy Association), also known as **aaa+**<sup>®</sup>, today announced that it has launched a new project to improve access to care and treatment for transgender men and women living with HIV/AIDS. The project – “**Improving Access to Care Among Transgender Men & Women Living with HIV/AIDS under the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP)**” – aims to raise awareness about issues confronting transgender men and women living with HIV/AIDS who also access care and treatment (or whom could benefit from such care and treatment) under ADAP, as well as provide useful resources and tools to the communities serving them.

Janssen Therapeutics, Gilead Sciences and ViiV Healthcare are funding the transgender health project. It will include several elements, which unfold over the coming months.

“Despite spotty data, there is an agreement that more needs to be done to address the unique health needs of the transgender community living with HIV/AIDS,” said **Brandon M. Macsata**, CEO of the ADAP Advocacy Association. “Many social and structural factors pose challenges to serving transgender individuals, yet as a marginalized population they’re most at risk for acquiring the virus.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), transgender communities in the United States are among the groups at highest risk for HIV infection. There is no concrete data on the number of male-to-female and female-to-male transgender persons, nor gender-nonconforming persons living with HIV-infection accessing services under ADAP.

“It is important to focus on discussing and identifying competency measures that would aid in providing solid data collection in this area – especially with respect to the number of transgender individuals accessing services under ADAP – as well as expanding access for same by way of competency,” summarized **Jen Laws**, an independent policy consultant specializing in various aspects of healthcare policy and focusing on the needs of the HIV affected and transgender communities. “The ADAP Advocacy is committed to improved cultural competency for the transgender community in healthcare, in general, and what that means for the population accessing ADAP, specifically.”

According to Laws, transgender individuals will prioritize transition related care above all other care – foregoing other necessary care in favor of access to transition-related care. Therefore, it is critically necessary for providers with HIV-positive transgender clients to be competent for the greatest efficacy of care.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas excellent resources exist to promote transgender HIV testing,<sup>2</sup> as well as available programs, faith communities, and healthcare services,<sup>3</sup> **presently nothing exists specific to ADAP serving the transgender community**. There exists a need to raise awareness among key stakeholders – among them, ADAP Directors, community service providers, and state/local advocacy organizations – about existing and emerging issues confronting the transgender community. Furthermore, there is a need to model existing best practices<sup>4</sup> to ADAP across the 50 states and territories in the United States.

To learn more about the ADAP Advocacy Association or its Transgender Health Project, please email [info@adapadvocacyassociation.org](mailto:info@adapadvocacyassociation.org).

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*About the ADAP Advocacy Association:* The ADAP Advocacy Association mission is to promote and enhance the AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) and improves access to care for persons living with HIV/AIDS. **aaa+**<sup>®</sup> works with advocates, community, health care, government, patients, pharmaceutical companies and other stakeholders to raise awareness, offer patient educational program, and foster greater community collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> *Barriers and Facilitators to Engagement and Retention in Care among Transgender Women Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus*, Sevelius, J.M., Patouhas, E., Keatley, J.G. et al. *ann. behav. med.* (2014) 47: 5. doi:10.1007/s12160-013-9565-8.

<sup>2</sup> The Center of Excellence for Transgender Health, University of California, San Francisco, "Transgender HIV Testing Toolkit," April 11, 2016; last viewed online at <http://transhealth.ucsf.edu/trans?page=ev-nthtd-2016>.

<sup>3</sup> Transcending Transgender Program and the Alameda County Office of AIDS Administration, "Transgender Resource Guide," 2016; last viewed online at [http://www.acphd.org/media/269820/transgender\\_resource\\_guide.pdf](http://www.acphd.org/media/269820/transgender_resource_guide.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> JoAnne Keatley, MSW, YMSM+LGBT Center of Excellence, "Transgender People - Exploring Diversity and Health Service Needs," August 28, 2015; last viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/141821792>.