



## NATIONAL WOMEN AND AIDS COLLECTIVE (NWAC)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### The Challenge of “Getting to Zero”

*Getting to zero new HIV infections is a laudable goal hampered by the Sequester’s destruction of our HIV service delivery system and fragile social net.*

As we approach the 25<sup>th</sup> World AIDS Day anniversary recognizing the devastating impact of the of the AIDS epidemic, our progress towards “getting to zero” in the United States is both hopeful and problematic. The National Women and AIDS Collective (NWAC) is cautiously optimistic by the reported reduction in the rate of new HIV infections among women in the US, especially among African American women. But this optimism is tempered by the impact of policy and continued social conditions which could undermine the progress being made. The National Minority AIDS Collective (NMAC) recently produced an info-graphic which shows the drastic cuts in HIV funding resulting from the Sequester. NMAC estimates that 65% of people living with HIV/AIDS who will be dramatically and disproportionately impacted by cuts in housing subsidies and AIDS medications will be people of color. Additionally, this same population will be disproportionately affected by cuts in food stamps, housing assistance and child care.

As noted by Liz Brosnan, Executive Director for Christie’s Place and NWAC Board Chair, “NWAC has long identified that socio-economic hardships and the inequality of women are underlying social stressors that increase a woman’s chance of acquiring HIV, make it less likely she will know her status, and result in poorer medical outcomes, especially for women of color.” Although 62% of new HIV infections are among men who have sex with men, African American heterosexual women still have the next highest incidence and prevalence of HIV infection among women and heterosexual men (CDC HIV Fact Sheet, 2012). African American and Latina women ages 13-24 account for 32% of the US female population, yet account for 82% of all HIV infections among women (The Body, Women, 2013).

Researchers and HIV service providers have long identified gender inequity and the resulting health disparity as a contributor to women’s HIV acquisition. Yet, for the most part, HIV prevention in the United States for women has focused largely on condom distribution, negotiating for safer sex and disclosure of HIV status. None of these approaches truly addresses what makes most women vulnerable for HIV – a history of childhood sexual abuse, gender roles especially in terms of safer sex negotiation, poverty, domestic violence, isolation and stigma. This must change.

NWAC proclaims that the fight to retain HIV funding and the social safety net must be our priority, because the women we serve are deeply affected by the Sequester and by the proposed long term cuts in food stamps, WIC and other anti-poverty programs. Thus, we join with others in calling for Congress to stop the Sequester and provide sufficient HIV and social services funding for “getting to zero”.

*NWAC’s mission is to advocate and build the capacity of women-led and serving organizations and programs to work in partnership with women impacted by HIV/AIDS in order to improve their overall health and quality of life. For more information see [www.nwac-us.org](http://www.nwac-us.org).*