

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number is 93.943.

B. Purpose

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announces the availability of fiscal year (FY) 2003 funds for a cooperative agreement program called the Minority HIV/AIDS Research Initiative (MARI) that is funded by the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI). The MARI program has been established to build capacity for HIV epidemiologic and prevention research in Black and Hispanic communities and to promote the independent research careers of HIV/AIDS investigators working in these communities. In addition, MARI aims to engage in capacity building among researchers at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions and Hispanic Serving Health Professions Schools as stipulated in Federally promulgated Executive Orders 13256 and 13230, respectively. You may reference these Executive Orders at the following Web Sites: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011012-10.html> and <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/02/20020212-3.html>

This initiative addresses the "Healthy People 2010" focus area of HIV as well as the CDC's HIV prevention strategic plan through 2005. The overarching national goal stated in the CDC's HIV prevention strategic plan is to reduce the number of new HIV infections in the U.S. by 50 percent by 2005 by focusing on eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in new HIV infections. The CDC 2001 year-end HIV/AIDS surveillance report, which outlines the racial disparities in HIV/AIDS, reveals that Blacks and Hispanics together represented 57 percent of reported AIDS cases and 62 percent of reported HIV cases in 2001. Furthermore, of the new HIV cases in 2001, 58 percent of Black and Hispanic men and approximately 40 percent of Black and Hispanic women had unknown or unreported risk upon presentation for HIV testing. These statistics highlight the urgent need for HIV epidemiologic and prevention research in Black and Hispanic populations that are at-risk for HIV infection.

The goals of the MARI program are to:

- (1) To build HIV prevention research capacity in Black and Hispanic communities in which insufficient research has been conducted by partnering with and developing new investigators from these communities to address pertinent research questions.
- (2) To engage in career development and provide research opportunities for

new investigators from Black and Hispanic communities through collaboration with the Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention at CDC. This will be achieved by encouraging these scientists to develop independent research skills needed to gain experience in HIV epidemiologic and prevention research, to present the results of their research at national conferences and to publish their results in peer-reviewed journals.

(3) Develop and conduct HIV epidemiologic prevention research, in the form of limited case-control, cross-sectional or qualitative projects that have public health relevance to Black and Hispanic communities.

Measurable outcomes of the program will be in alignment with the following performance goals for the National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention (NCHSTP):

- (1) Decrease the number of persons at high risk for acquiring or transmitting HIV infection;
- (2) Increase the proportion of HIV-infected people who know they are infected;
- (3) Increase the proportion of HIV-infected people who are linked to appropriate prevention, care, and treatment services; and
- (4) Strengthen the capacity to develop and implement effective HIV prevention interventions.

Given the goals of MARI and the CDC's HIV strategic plan, this program announcement calls for epidemiologic and prevention research that will advance scientific knowledge about HIV transmission, testing and treatment patterns, as well as social and environmental factors that influence risk behaviors in Black and Hispanic communities. This announcement specifically invites applications addressing a variety of scientific research topics outlined below in sections "I" and "II".

Section I

Participation of Minorities in Government-Sponsored Research

The participation of communities of color in HIV vaccine research is critical to ensuring that HIV vaccine candidates are effective across diverse racial and ethnic groups and that all groups have equal access to eventual vaccines. Community-based studies are needed to understand facilitators and barriers related to participation in government-sponsored research, which may include examination of the following: (1) Perceptions of AIDS in relationship to other community health issues, (2) community and individual attitudes of research related to HIV/AIDS,

particularly vaccine trials, (3) the relationship between socioeconomic status, stigma, and disenfranchisement to research involvement, (4) strategies for enhancing community partnerships in the support and conduct of research, and (5) the historical context of government-sponsored research in minority communities such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study.

Voluntary HIV Testing and Counseling of Young Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM)

Recent data indicate that up to 90 percent of young MSM of color who are infected with HIV are unaware of their seropositive status. Other studies indicate that HIV+ men who become aware of their status substantially reduce their sexual risk behaviors. Studies are needed to increase HIV testing among young MSM of color who are at risk for transmitting or contracting HIV and to determine motivating factors in the desire to seek HIV testing. Of particular interest are studies that test different types of persuasive communications to promote HIV testing in this population.

Prevalence of Intravenous Drug Use (IDU) Related HIV in the Southeast

The epidemiology of the HIV among intravenous drug users has been well defined in the United States, with the exception of the Southeast region. Epidemiologic and surveillance studies are needed to assess the prevalence, incidence and risk factors for HIV infection among Southeastern U.S. intravenous drug users. In addition, data are needed to quantify the seroprevalence of Hepatitis B and C and attendant risks for acquisition of these diseases in southern populations.

Missed Opportunities for Prevention of Perinatal Transmission

Perinatal transmission in the U.S. has been drastically reduced since 1993. However, greater than 75 percent of babies with HIV continue to be born to Black and Hispanic mothers. Elimination of perinatal transmission can only be achieved by reducing missed opportunities that occur among these women and by addressing issues associated with failures of prevention efforts. Reasons for these missed opportunities and prevention failures vary and warrant investigation. Studies are needed to understand why prevention failures occur among Black and Hispanic women and infants who access the required services and to address the reasons that these mothers and infants may not access prevention