



May 18, 2021

The Honorable Provider Advocates Network
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
Seattle, WA 98144

Dear Provider Advocates Network of the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable:

Thank you for your letter and for your continued partnership and leadership in viral hepatitis policy efforts. My office, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH), is committed to eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat. As you are aware, the Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP) released the Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan: A Roadmap to Elimination 2021–2025 (Viral Hepatitis Plan) in January 2021 and will release the Federal Implementation Plan later this year. The Federal Implementation Plan will provide a coordinated federal response to addressing the strategies within the Viral Hepatitis Plan. Priorities within the Viral Hepatitis Plan include removing barriers to accessing life-saving hepatitis C treatment, scaling up implementation of hepatitis B and hepatitis C screening recommendations, eliminating perinatal transmission of hepatitis B and hepatitis C, integrating programs to address the syndemic of viral hepatitis, HIV, STIs, and substance use disorders, improving the national capacity to conduct chronic viral hepatitis surveillance, and addressing health disparities through a health equity lens.

Thank you for highlighting areas needing improvement. We hope to address these issues through continued coordination with our federal partners in the Federal Implementation Plan. Below are some more specific responses to the priority areas outlined in your letter. We look forward to working with the Provider Advocates Network of the National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable in addressing these gaps and taking steps towards viral hepatitis elimination.

- Access and reimbursement to hepatitis C treatment. HHS is committed to increasing access to care and reducing barriers to life-saving treatment. OIDP continues to coordinate with CMS on barriers to accessing preventive care, and treatment services.
- Hepatitis B and hepatitis C screening guidelines. OIDP plans to coordinate with federal partners to scale up best practices of recommended viral hepatitis screening guidelines and identify other means to improve implementation of the recommendations, including through quality measures.
- Prevention of perinatal transmission. The Viral Hepatitis National Strategic Plan and the HHS Maternal Health Action Plan both include strategies focused on preventing perinatal transmission of viral hepatitis. This includes a strategy to improve coordination across prenatal care and viral hepatitis care providers to improve prevention and management of hepatitis B and hepatitis C for pregnant women and newborns. As OIDP moves forward

in implementing the Viral Hepatitis Plan, we plan to coordinate activities across the federal government focused on preventing perinatal transmission.

- Utilizing a syndemic lens, OI DP is focused on implementing the Viral Hepatitis Plan, which emphasizes an integrated syndemic approach and is collaborating with partners to improve testing, vaccination, linkage to care, and treatment in a variety of clinical and non-clinical settings. OI DP is especially focused on efforts to increase viral hepatitis services in harm reduction settings. OI DP is moving forward with developing the Federal Implementation Plan through a Federal Implementation Steering Committee, which will utilize a syndemic approach to leverage knowledge and resources across the government in viral hepatitis, HIV, STIs, and substance use disorders.

Thank you for your partnership in our shared goal of eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health threat. My office is looking forward to our continued engagement with National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RL Levine MD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "RL" being prominent and "Levine MD" following in a similar style.

Rachel L. Levine, M.D.