

# America's Heartland Denies Life-Saving Medications for HIV-Positive Residents

by [Elizabeth Lombino](#) · February 21, 2011



For the past few weeks, we've been covering what's become known as an [ADAP Crisis in America](#). The latest state in need of our attention is Ohio. America's Heartland. Unless you are living with HIV/AIDS, that is.

First, some background. AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) are state programs that assist HIV-positive individuals with paying for the insanely expensive medications needed to treat and manage this devastating disease. Many HIV-positive people are unable to afford their medications. If they cannot take these essential medications, their HIV disease will most likely progress and become life-threatening. Yet despite this troublesome fact, ADAP funding is being slashed in most states across the country, leaving thousands of HIV-positive individuals left without the means to pay for their essential medications.

Most of the states that have been highlighted in this series have waiting lists. As of February 11, the number of HIV+ people on ADAP waiting lists has climbed up to [6,235 individuals](#) in 10 states. Just one month ago, there were [5,154 people](#) waiting. This is an increase of 1,081 people in just over 30 days.

These waiting lists are troublesome enough. Yet there are a variety of other [cost containment strategies](#) that states have been enacting in order to save money. Ohio is a state that seems to be utilizing all of them.

[Here's the breakdown](#): Ohio currently has 427 people on their waiting list. Ohio has lowered the financial eligibility for ADAP to 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), which effectively dis-enrolled 257 people. Ohio has also reduced their formulary for medical eligibility, which essentially means that only the "sickest" HIV-positive individuals (those with lowest T-Cell counts and high viral loads) will qualify for financial assistance. All of these measures translate to nearly [1,000 HIV-positive people](#) unable to access care.

[Advocates](#) believe these new restrictions will no doubt lead to many HIV-positive individuals seeing a decline in their health. With all of this red tape, it becomes that much more difficult for a person in need to qualify for vital assistance. Mark Leydorf writes in his article for [POZ](#): "As Congressional Republicans on the Hill slash government spending and attempt to reverse Obama's health care reform, HIV advocates call cuts to AIDS funding and services 'the real death panels.'"

These are not just sound bites and talking points -- this is reality. Without consistent medication management, a person's HIV disease will absolutely progress and become life-threatening. We have come so far in treatment advances for HIV. People can thrive when they have access to these medications. We need to ensure that all HIV-positive individuals have the opportunity to live with HIV, not die from it. To see a return of people dying from advanced HIV disease and AIDS because they cannot afford their medications would be a complete catastrophe. We need to continue to move forward in controlling the AIDS epidemic, not fall backwards.

There seems to be little hope. Imagine being told you are HIV-positive and that you need to take countless medications to control your disease. Medications that are toxic and have major side effects, yet are miracles of science in that they can help destroy the HIV virus in your body and keep you alive. Even keep you healthy and active in all aspects of your life. Then imagine being told that these medications can cost up to tens of thousands of dollars a year and you can't get any financial assistance from your state. You are forced to wait for the very medications that were created to save your life.

Not only is this traumatic for the HIV-positive individual, it is also certainly more of a financial strain on the state. In the medical world, especially for those treating HIV, "[a healthy patient costs less than a sick one](#)." If a person's HIV disease progress to the point of AIDS, she will experience many more medical complications that will need their own treatments and medications. Not to mention the potential countless hospital stays, invasive treatments and other costly medical interventions.

[Please join us in telling the State of Ohio to care more about its HIV-positive residents.](#) Demand they reinstate full ADAP coverage for all HIV+ residents.

*Photo Credit: [Cindy Funk](#)*

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