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AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) to Benefit from First National Program Providing ADAP Patients with Hepatitis C Medicine

Washington, DC – The National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD) announced today that patients currently benefiting from state-administered AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAPs) will now have access to the first national program to provide free medicine for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C. Under the new initiative known as the *Commitment To Community* program, Schering-Plough Corporation will provide a full course of combination therapy with PEG-INTRON (peginterferon alfa-2b) Powder for Injection and REBETOL (ribavirin USP) Capsules for free to 1,500 ADAP patients chronically infected with hepatitis C. Hepatitis C is a blood-borne infection that can damage the liver and eventually lead to serious liver disease.

“With current ADAP funding falling far short of meeting the demand of patients in need, this initiative with Schering-Plough is a creative solution that will yield significant savings to a system in crisis and help bring measurable relief to ADAP programs nationwide,” said Julie Scofield, NASTAD’s Executive Director. “Providing treatment for hepatitis C treatment through ADAPs adds an additional financial burden for many state ADAPs. NASTAD’s ADAP Crisis Task Force worked collaboratively with Schering-Plough to create this unique program so that

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we can now provide ADAP patients access to hepatitis C therapy,” Scofield added.

The *Commitment To Community* program will be administered through Schering-Plough’s patient assistance program, *Commitment To Care*. In addition to access to free medicine, hepatitis C patients covered by ADAP will have access to Schering-Plough’s free, personalized patient support program, *Be In Charge*, which offers 24-hour/7-days a week toll-free telephone access to a nurse counselor and other educational tools to help patients cope with the physical and emotional impact of hepatitis C, as well as the rigors of treatment. The *Commitment To Community* program will allow hepatitis C patients to follow simple steps to obtain treatment, including receiving a unique identification number from ADAP and free direct medicine delivery.

ADAPs provide treatments to low-income, uninsured, and underinsured individuals living with certain diseases, including HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, three U.S. Pacific territories (Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa) and one Associated Jurisdiction (the Republic of the Marshall Islands). Each year about 135,000 people receive services from ADAPs. ADAPs are a discretionary grant program funded through the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act. Because ADAPs are not entitlement programs, funding levels are not based on the number of people who need prescription drugs or the cost of medications. In addition to federal funding, ADAPs may also receive state general revenue support and other funding, but these other sources are highly variable and dependent on local decisions.