



Dear Elected Officials and All Concerned Citizens:

As the Chief Elected Official of the Houston EMA, Part A, Ryan White Program, I am pleased to provide this letter of support and concurrence with the Houston Area Comprehensive HIV Prevention and Care Services Plan for 2012 – 2014.

Every three years, jurisdictions that receive federal HIV dollars are required to assess the current system of HIV services in their community, and then identify essential steps for improving the system. To accomplish this, local HIV Planning Councils develop comprehensive HIV plans using a collaborative community-based process. For the first time, the Houston Area has produced a joint plan for both HIV prevention and HIV care, which, when implemented, will improve the entire continuum of HIV services, from education and awareness to life-preserving care and treatment.

More than 100 individuals, including representatives of 56 agencies, people living with and at risk for HIV/AIDS and other concerned community members, shared their expertise over the course of eight months to develop this joint document. They identified the key issues facing the Houston Area, which include preventing new infections, ensuring access to care, and reducing disparities. They identified solutions for filling gaps in services, increasing collaboration, and meeting the needs of special populations. They also looked to the future of health services and identified steps to ready our HIV system for health care reform. Lastly, they defined how success will be measured and attained.

I want to commend the individuals who participated in this process for their hard work and dedication, especially those who served in leadership roles by chairing workgroups and other planning teams. I also want to encourage my fellow elected officials and policy makers, as well as all local service providers and stakeholders, to use this document as a tool in their own decisions regarding priorities for health services in the Houston Area.

Great inroads have been made in addressing the HIV epidemic and ensuring that all people living with HIV/AIDS have the opportunity to enjoy long, healthy, and productive lives. We can have an even greater impact if we work together and use the 2012 - 2014 Comprehensive HIV Prevention and Care Services Plan as our guide. I look forward to continuing my partnership with the community as we work toward this important goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Emmett", is written over a faint, circular watermark or ghosted version of the Harris County logo.

Ed Emmett  
County Judge