

HEALTH OFFICIALS SEEK AIDS TESTS FOR IMMIGRANTS

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Byline: By BERNARD WEINRAUB, Special to The New York Times

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Body

The Public Health Service today recommended mandatory AIDS testing for the more than 500,000 applicants seeking permanent residence each year in the United States.

The proposal, which goes far beyond previous measures, is subject to approval by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Dr. Otis R. Bowen, and the White House Office of Management and Budget. Government officials said they expected the Administration to approve the measure.

Jim Brown, a spokesman for the Public Health Service, said the agency wanted to add infection by the HIV virus, which can cause AIDS, to the list of "dangerous infectious diseases" that is used to prevent infected aliens from gaining permanent resident status. The agency had previously proposed adding AIDS to the list but only sought to bar those actually showing symptoms of the disease.

The list of dangerous diseases includes leprosy, tuberculosis, syphilis and gonorrhea. Aliens with these diseases are excluded from the United States.

How the Proposals Differ

Mr. Brown said the new proposal, first reported today in The Los Angeles Times, would bar aliens who test positive for the virus, but have no symptoms of AIDS. Health officials have said that a person infected with the virus, but has no symptoms, is assumed to be capable of spreading it to others. People who test positive have about a 20 percent to 30 percent chance of getting AIDS within five years, according to the Federal Centers for Disease Control.

Under a previous proposal, a physician examining an individual seeking permanent residence could require the applicant to take the AIDS test only if "the doctor sees symptoms or manifestations of AIDS." That proposal had been approved by the Department of Health and Human Services but not by the Office of Management and Budget. Routine blood screening for AIDS was ruled out under the earlier proposal.

Under the new plan, however, "everyone who wants permanent status will be tested," Mr. Brown said.

Under Federal law, any alien seeking permanent resident status must undergo "a physical and mental examination."

Since 1980, the number of aliens accepted by the United States as permanent residents - those granted immigrant visas, or "green cards" - has ranged from 530,000 to 600,000 a year.

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The proposed requirement would not apply to tourists or visitors, nor would it be used to deny a temporary visa to a foreigner.

Question on Amnesty Program

Mr. Brown said he did not know what impact the testing proposal, if adopted, would have on illegal aliens applying for permanent status under the amnesty program that started this month. The Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates that up to 3.9 million illegal aliens will apply for legalization under the program.

Some Immigration and Naturalization officials have already called for AIDS screening for all applicants but such suggestions were rejected earlier.

Officials conceded this evening that the proposal to test all people seeking to immigrate to the United States raised difficult questions. One official said it was unclear what would happen if a foreigner on a student visa seeks to take up permanent residence and took the AIDS test and tested positive. The official said it was uncertain whether the student would have to leave the country immediately or could remain until his student visa expired.

Kennedy Legislation Offered

Meanwhile, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, today proposed legislation to increase AIDS education and prevention programs as well as steps to deal with the care and treatment of victims of the disease. Mr. Kennedy called his proposal the first comprehensive legislation on AIDS, and said it would cost about \$900 million a year. That is about the same amount recently approved by the Senate Budget Committee for fiscal 1988 to deal with AIDS.

Mr. Kennedy said the Reagan Administration had offered "ideological bickering and paper policies" and has "squandered precious time."

"By 1991, AIDS will claim more lives each year than the entire Vietnam war," Mr. Kennedy said. "We must act immediately and decisively to halt this killer."

The disease, for which there is no cure, cripples the body's immune system, leaving victims exposed to infections and cancer. The AIDS virus spreads through sexual intercourse with an infected partner, transfers of blood, as with hypodermic syringes shared by intravenous drug users, and from mother to fetus in the womb.

As of May 4, AIDS has been diagnosed in 35,219 Americans, of whom 20,352 have died, all since 1979.

The initial report of the Public Health Service proposal seeking testing for all immigrants applying for permanent residence came in a memorandum from Robert E. Windom, Assistant Secretary for Health in the Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Windom supervises the Public Health Service.

"We believe this is necessary because any person infected is assumed to be capable of transmitting the virus," Mr. Windom said.

If the proposal is approved by Dr. Bowen and the Office of Management and Budget, the final rule would be published in the Federal Register, inviting public comment. It would become a part of the Federal regulations after any major legal objections are resolved.

Should the United States seek to test all foreigners seeking permanent residence, it would follow the lead of some other nations, including some that have relatively stringent rules on visitors carrying the AIDS virus.

China, for example, tests applicants for student visas and researchers planning to stay for more than six months. South Korea demands the AIDS test for foreigners seeking long-term residency.

HEALTH OFFICIALS SEEK AIDS TESTS FOR IMMIGRANTS

Saudi Arabia requires an **AIDS test** for long-term visitors and those **seeking** work permits. Belgium and India require **AIDS tests** for those applying for student visas.

Japan and other nations are considering **AIDS testing** for long-term foreign visitors but have taken no action yet, according to State Department officials.

Senator Kennedy said today that he was working with Representative Henry A. Waxman, Democrat of California, the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's **Health** panel, on additional proposals to expand voluntary **AIDS testing** programs. Mr. Kennedy said that in certain areas, such as the military, he endorsed mandatory **AIDS testing**.

Mr. Kennedy's bill **seeks** increased funds for an education campaign, recruitment and training of new medical personnel and full use of television and other media to inform the nation about the prevention of **AIDS**. The proposal also **seeks** more involvement by community physicians in the treatment of **AIDS** victims, and the increased use of home care and day care as a substitute for hospital treatment.

The measure also **seeks** improved procedures for placing Federal funds into research laboratories and clinics. The National Institutes of **Health** would have to cut grant approval time to no more than six months, and more money would go for researchers and a network of **AIDS** research **testing** centers.

Senators Christopher J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, and Barbara A. Mikulski, Democrat of Maryland, joined Mr. Kennedy in sponsoring the legislation. He said Senators Bob Dole, the Republican leader, and Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, worked on the proposal and "we're counting on their support."

Mr. Dodd said the legislation was especially important to him because he had recently attended a memorial service for Representative Stewart B. McKinney, a nine-term Republican from Connecticut, who died of an infection brought on by **AIDS**. "The figures are horrifying," Mr. Dodd said.

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