

## **Status of June 2010 ACBSA Recommendations**

On June 10-11, 2010, the HHS Advisory Committee on Blood Safety and Availability (ACBSA) met to discuss the current Food and Drug Administration (FDA) policy on men who have sex with other men (MSM). FDA's current policy states that men who have had sex with other men at any time since 1977 are currently deferred as blood donors.

The ACBSA engaged in deliberations and discussed the following: important factors to consider in making a policy change; scientific information including risk assessments; whether any additional studies are needed before implementing a policy change or following a policy change; monitoring tools or surveillance activities that could be implemented, and whether those should be implemented before implementing any policy change; and, whether additional safety measures, if any, are needed to assure blood safety under a revised deferral policy.

The ACBSA recommended, by a vote of 9 to 6, retaining the current policy at this time. However, the ACBSA was unanimous in finding that the current policy is suboptimal in permitting some potentially high risk donations while preventing some low risk donations. The ACBSA expressed concern about the lack of well-characterized alternate policy options due to the difficulty in designing and assessing a modified donor questionnaire and an absence of current data in some key epidemiologic areas. The Committee's [recommendations](#) are comprehensive and require careful considerations.

In response to these recommendations, a U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) working group was convened to review the current MSM deferral and to propose strategic steps, including scientifically valid research for developing and validation of an HHS alternative policy that would guide a possible change in deferral. The working group was also charged with identifying priorities from the ACBSA recommendations to include both near- and long-term priorities.