

Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA)

Stable Housing Key to the Health of People Living with HIV/AIDS

Recent studies confirm that persons living with HIV/AIDS must have stable housing to access comprehensive health care and adhere to complex HIV/AIDS drug therapies. HOPWA is the only federal program dedicated to the housing needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families. In FY2004 HOPWA funding supports the delivery of housing and related services in 117 formula jurisdictions (38 states and 79 metropolitan areas) as well as 30 competitive grants. During program year 2001-2002 HOPWA funding assisted 84,059 units of housing and leveraged resources for an additional 51,717 households, according to the Office of HIV/AIDS Housing.

More than one-half of people living with HIV/AIDS are likely to need housing assistance at some point in their illness. Even though stable housing has been shown to be a necessary link to medical and supportive services, accessing housing is difficult as the wait for affordable housing increases in many communities across the country. Compounding the problem of waiting lists is the need to serve the increasing number of persons living not only with HIV/AIDS but also with histories of homelessness, mental illness, and substance abuse.

Overview of HOPWA Services and Initiatives

HOPWA makes grants to local communities, states, and nonprofit organizations for projects that benefit low income persons medically diagnosed with HIV/AIDS and their families. HOPWA funding provides housing assistance and related supportive services as part of HUD's Consolidated Planning initiative that works in partnership with communities and neighborhoods in managing federal funds appropriated to HIV/AIDS programs. HOPWA grantees are encouraged to develop community-wide strategies and form partnerships with area nonprofit organizations. HOPWA funds are dispersed through three mechanisms:

The HOPWA Formula Program allocates 90 percent of HOPWA funds to states and cities with populations of more than 500,000 and 1,500 cumulative AIDS cases.

The HOPWA Competitive Program is a national competition to select model projects or programs across the country.

The HOPWA National Technical Assistance Funding Program awards are provided to strengthen the management, operation, and capacity of HOPWA grantees, project sponsors, and potential applicants for HOPWA funding.

FY 2005 Funding Needs

In FY 2005 HOPWA needs a \$55.2 million increase for a total appropriation of \$350 million in order to:

- reduce waiting lists for HOPWA-funded housing;
- increase the capacity of communities to develop new housing for poor individuals with HIV/AIDS and their families;
- provide housing voucher support; and
- provide a minimal level of social services to keep people in their housing and supplement care available through other sources.

Homeless People with HIV/AIDS have Difficulty Accessing Care

- One national survey found that only 17 percent of homeless people living with HIV/AIDS who would benefit from antiretroviral drugs were taking them, as compared to 51 percent of housed people.
- Columbia University research revealed that homeless people living with HIV/AIDS who received a combination of stable housing and social case management were nine times more likely to enter into and remain in medical care, including adherence to HIV/AIDS treatments.

HOPWA funds are used for a wide range of housing, social services, and program planning and development costs, including: the acquisition, rehabilitation or construction of housing units; costs for facility operations; rental assistance; and short-term payments to prevent homelessness. HOPWA funds also may be used for health care and mental health services, chemical dependency treatment, nutritional services, case management, assistance with daily living, and other supportive services.

Local Control Allows Flexibility

HOPWA provides maximum flexibility to states and communities to implement strategies that respond to local housing needs and shortfalls. HOPWA resources are coordinated with other federal, state, local and private funds through a community's Consolidated Plan. Grant recipients are also encouraged to develop community-wide comprehensive strategies and to form partnerships with area non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations, to provide housing assistance and related services for eligible people with HIV/AIDS.

Unmet Need Still A Problem

HOPWA grantees across the nation report that the need for services far outweighs available resources, as evidenced by the extensive waiting lists for services. In Connecticut, 80% of the 1,082 persons living with HIV/AIDS who requested housing assistance were denied due to lack of space. Similarly, in Phoenix, AZ providers turn away more than half of the people requesting assistance. In Massachusetts 2,000 people are on the waiting list, in St. Louis and Washington, DC over 500 and 474 in Dallas. Other jurisdictions across the U.S. report extensive waiting lists for HOPWA-funded housing assistance.