HOPWA, the Federal AIDS Housing Program, Marks 30 Years

Highlights from three decades of Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA). Plus the new “Reset, Renew, Recharge” initiative.

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The following post on HIV.gov is written by Rita Harcrow, Director, Office of HIV/AIDS Housing, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Dear HOPWA Grantees, Project Sponsors, and Friends,

On October 28, 2022, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program. The HOPWA program received its first direct appropriations on October 28, 1992, which provided formula funding to 38 jurisdictions including 11 states, Puerto Rico, and 27 cities on behalf of metropolitan statistical areas. The HOPWA program has grown from the first allocation of $150 million to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 allocation of $450 million. The portfolio of grants currently receiving HOPWA funding has also grown to 143 formula jurisdictions, 82 competitive permanent supportive housing (PSH) grants, 20 competitive special projects of national significance (SPNS) grants and over 1,000 project sponsors. A lot has changed in 30 years, but the impact and importance of the HOPWA program remains.

Thirty years ago, the HOPWA program was established to provide communities with resources and incentives for devising long-term strategies to develop a range of housing assistance and supportive services for low-income people living with HIV and their families to overcome key barriers to stable housing such as affordability and discrimination. The HOPWA program was created before there were the lifesaving HIV medications we have today, so at the time it was envisioned as a program to provide people with AIDS a place to die with dignity. Now, with the advancements in HIV care and treatment, the purpose of the Office of HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH) and the HOPWA program is to elevate and utilize housing as an effective structural intervention in ending the HIV epidemic.

We have made a lot of progress in 30 years. Collectively, we now have the tools to end the HIV epidemic while also working toward a vaccine and cure. OHH is proud to be working alongside our partners within HUD and throughout the federal government to implement actions in the Federal Implementation Plan for the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (PDF, 707 KB) (NHAS). The Federal

Implementation Plan introduced five NHAS indicators of progress focused on quality of life among people with HIV, including an updated housing indicator that aims to decrease the proportion of people with HIV who are homeless or unstably housed by 50%. HOPWA grantees and project sponsors utilize housing as a platform to connect low-income people with HIV and their families with needed services for good health outcomes and quality of life including medical care, mental health care, and supportive services like transportation, nutrition, and employment programs.

We see the hard work being done by HOPWA grantees and project sponsors to deliver housing and services to low-income people with HIV and their families as a direct contribution toward ending the HIV epidemic. This is important work. To support HOPWA providers, OHH has launched the Reset, Renew, Recharge (3R) initiative which is an overarching strategy designed to move the HOPWA program forward in new ways as part of HOPWA's 30-year anniversary. This strategy is a forward-looking blueprint for advancing program design and core values that will positively impact the lives and housing stability of people living with HIV. Reset, Renew, Recharge is intended to help communities achieve program excellence and positive community impact, ensure that programs are designed to meet the changing needs of the modern HIV epidemic, promote equity for all people living with HIV, and underscore the importance of client centered, low barrier housing and services.

Our goal for the 3R Initiative is that HOPWA grantees and project sponsors will embrace an expanded vision for the HOPWA program, understand and effectively implement program requirements, design local HOPWA programs to meet the needs of the community, deliver HOPWA housing and services in an equitable fashion, and use data to tell the story of how HOPWA impacts lives. We will be working closely with technical assistance (TA) providers to make new resources and materials available to support this Initiative. Learn more about the 3R initiative

More big announcements are coming soon. We are preparing to publish a proposed rule to update the HOPWA regulations in Spring 2023. The new rule will incorporate provisions of the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA), Public Law 114-201, and better define eligible activities and program requirements. We are also preparing for another HOPWA Institute in Summer 2023.

While we have a lot to look forward to, we also want to look back on the actions and moments that got us here. Below are just a few highlights. A full timeline looking back on 30 years of the HOPWA program is available.

- 1994: Establishment of the Office of HIV/AIDS Housing which administers the HOPWA program. The mission of the office is to ensure that each of the programs and initiatives of HUD is responsive to the needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS. The primary function of the office is to take every possible step to guarantee that Departmental programs and policies support the housing and specialized service needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

- 2003 – April 25: HUD published a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) to solicit applications for a Federal collaboration with CDC to study the connection of housing and HIV. The study was the first-of-its-kind linking housing to positive health outcomes for people with HIV and established the HOPWA program as an evidence-based and cost-effective platform for improving the health outcomes of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.
- 2016 – July 29: Title VII of the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA), Public Law 114-201, amended section 854(c) of the AIDS Housing Opportunity Act (42 U.S.C. 12903(c)) to modernize the HOPWA allocation formula and address other administrative provisions, and section 853 (42 U.S.C. 12902) to add certain program definitions. The HOPWA formula modernization included changing data used for eligibility and allocations from "cumulative AIDS cases" to "living with HIV" effective for the 2017 allocation year.
- 2022- August 26: The Federal Implementation plan for the National HIV/AIDS Strategy (PDF, 707 KB) was released and HUD commits take a number of actions to support the four goals identified in the Strategy (PDF, 432 KB).

Throughout the year we will also shine a spotlight on HOPWA programs and the important work they are doing. We will send out HOPWA Provider Spotlights through our listserv and make them available online.

As we recognize and celebrate 30 years of HOPWA, we also want to thank all the HUD staff, Federal partners, HOPWA grantees and project sponsors, TA providers, HIV Housing advocates, and every other person who has contributed to making the HOPWA program the success it is today. Thank you for your work and contributions to support the HOPWA program over the years. Thank you for working to meet the housing and supportive service needs of low-income people with HIV and their families. Thank you for pushing to have housing recognized as a structural intervention in ending the HIV epidemic. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the HOPWA program, we are also celebrating you and all you have done for the HOPWA program. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Rita Harcrow (she/her)
Director, Office of HIV/AIDS Housing

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