How Medication Lockers Help Homeless People With HIV

The Miami program IDEA Exchange provides secure locations to store meds.

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Homeless people living with HIV face additional challenges when it comes to taking daily meds. They have no place to keep their antiretrovirals, and the tablets are often stolen or lost. The IDEA Exchange program is helping out homeless people in Miami by providing medication lockers, a secure place for storing HIV meds.

What's more, social workers with the program also offer to deliver a few days' worth of meds to homeless people with HIV, reports The Associated Press. Similar programs already operate in Boston, New York and Washington, DC.

Sponsored by the University of Miami, IDEA Exchange gets prescriptions through Medicaid and federal drug assistance programs. It was launched last year following an HIV outbreak among the city's homeless population.

Providing meds to homeless people helps stop the spread of the virus. People who take daily meds and maintain an undetectable viral load cannot spread HIV sexually, a fact referred to as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable or U=U.

The program serves 13 people, and all have reached viral suppression, the AP reports. This is encouraging news, considering that of the 28,000 people living with HIV in Miami-Dade County, only 58% have reached viral suppression.

The program also helps homeless people develop self-confidence and self-reliance skills.

As Ivette Naida, who lives under a highway overpass, tells the AP: The program "gives me something to be responsible for."

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