

## HIV Community Services Program: Oregon Housing Opportunities in Partnership Program (OHOP)

### National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS)

After 30 years of a national HIV epidemic, the Obama Administration released the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS). The vision of the NHAS states:

*The United States will become a place where new HIV infections are rare and when they do occur, every person, regardless of age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic circumstance, will have unfettered access to high quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination.*

The NHAS has three primary goals, 1) reduce the number of people who become infected with HIV; 2) increase access to care and optimize health outcomes; and 3) reduce HIV-related health disparities. The HIV Community Services program of the Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division is invested in the goals of the NHAS.

An indicator of goal number 2 is specific to housing: by 2015, increase the number of Ryan White clients with permanent housing from 82 percent to 86 percent.

### Evidence/Best Practice

Many people with HIV face multiple life challenges – physical disabilities, mental illness, substance use disorders, comorbidities and other health issues – that present unique barriers to accessing housing, health care and services. Numerous studies show that access to safe, secure and stable housing provides a foundation for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH/A) to have positive health outcomes and avoid transmitting the virus. Providing stable housing for people living with HIV influences public health because it:

- Significantly increases the treatment success of people living with HIV, thereby reducing viral load.
- Is cost-effective because people who are stably housed are less likely to use emergency rooms.
- Decreases the risk of transmission because people who are stably housed are less likely to engage in risky activities of survival.



## Funding

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has been funding HIV-related housing programs since 1992. The OHOP program is currently funded by three HUD funding streams:

- Housing Opportunities For Persons With AIDS;
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance;
- HOME Investment Partnership Program.

## Services

The OHOP program helps clients achieve and maintain housing stability in order to avoid homelessness and improve their access to, and engagement in, HIV care and treatment. OHOP provides scattered-site rental assistance, housing case management, and information and referrals for people who are low-income and living with HIV. OHOP is designed to act as a bridge to long-term assistance programs such as Section 8 or self-sufficiency. The OHOP program serves the 31 counties outside of the Portland metropolitan area – or the Balance of State (BOS).

## Data/Outcomes

The OHOP program maintains a waitlist of BOS-eligible clients. At last count, the waitlist listed 127 households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and in need of subsidized housing. In a recent survey of CAREAssist clients,<sup>1</sup> 16 percent<sup>2</sup> of respondents reported unstable housing.

The OHOP program serves approximately 160 PLWH per year with very successful outcomes.

In 2010:

- 94 percent of OHOP clients maintained permanent stable housing;
- 92 percent had regular contact with a primary health care provider;
- 100 percent accessed and maintained health insurance;
- More than two-thirds successfully maintained a source of income;
- Only two persons exited to jail or prison.

These outcomes are considerable given the challenges of homelessness, mental health, substance use and histories of incarceration common among housing clients.



PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION  
HIV Community Services

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1. CAREAssist is Oregon's AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP). PDES conducted a satisfaction survey in 2009.
  2. Likely underreported as persons experiencing unstable housing were probably less likely to respond to this mail-based survey.