

# Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)

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**Administering agency:** Office of HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH) in HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD)

**Year program started:** 1990

**Number of persons/households served:** 52,000 households could be served if the President's FY15 budget request of \$332 million is appropriated by Congress

**Population targeted:** Low income people with HIV/AIDS, and their families

**FY14 funding:** \$330 million

The Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program provides funding to eligible jurisdictions to address the housing needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS and their families.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

HOPWA was created in the AIDS Housing Opportunities Act, a part of the Cranston-Gonzales National Affordable Housing Act of 1990, to provide housing assistance and related supportive services for low income people living with HIV/AIDS, and their families.

There is a perception that in America that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is under control, but in reality AIDS is still an active crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there are an estimated 55,000 new HIV infections each year. At the same time, there are more than 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the United States, and more than one sixth (15.8%) of those individuals are unaware that they have the virus.

For people living with HIV/AIDS housing is healthcare. For people struggling with the disabling and impoverishing effects of HIV/AIDS, housing is an essential cornerstone of health and stability. It is estimated that as many as half of all people living with HIV/AIDS will need housing assistance at some point in their illness. As with other chronic conditions that may make it difficult for an individual to find or maintain gainful employment, HIV/AIDS can be an impoverishing disease, requiring public subsidies for basic needs, including housing. For many of those individuals and families, short-term assistance with rent, mortgage, or utility costs will provide the necessary support to remain healthy and in stable housing. But for others, more intensive supportive services are needed.

The HOPWA program is designed to provide that housing assistance and related supportive services for low income people living with HIV/AIDS and their families. It also facilitates community efforts to develop comprehensive strategies to address HIV/AIDS housing need, and assists communities to create housing strategies to prevent these individuals from becoming homeless or unstably housed.

With improvements in drug therapies and medical care reducing the number of deaths, people are living longer with HIV/AIDS; therefore, there is an increasing demand for essential supportive services, including housing.

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

As a supportive housing program, HOPWA helps ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS can access and maintain adherence to necessary medical care and other services through assisting them with stable housing and support services.

Eligibility for HOPWA assistance is limited to low income individuals with HIV/AIDS, and their families. The vast majority of individuals receiving HOPWA housing assistance have extremely low income, income below 30% of the area median income (AMI). Sixty-five percent of people living with HIV/AIDS cite stable housing

as a tremendous need, second only to health care. Preliminary data from 40 HOPWA grantees, reporting on client outcomes under a new performance measurement format, demonstrates that 94% of clients receiving rental assistance have stabilized their housing.

HOPWA consists of two grant-making programs. Ninety percent of the funds are distributed as formula grants to states and localities to serve the metropolitan area in which they are located. The formula for this distribution is based on population size and the number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the metropolitan area as confirmed by the CDC.

During 2013, \$283.1 million dollars were awarded in HOPWA formula funds to grantees within 138 eligible areas. These grantees represent 41 states and Puerto Rico. In 2013, 135 formula grantees received three-quarters of available funding based on AIDS surveillance data. In addition, one quarter of the formula allocation was awarded to metropolitan areas that have a higher-than-average per capita incidence of AIDS. These formula funds can be used for a wide range of housing, social services, program planning, and development costs including, but not limited to: the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of housing units; costs for facility operations; rental assistance; and, short-term payments to prevent homelessness.

The other 10% of HOPWA funds are distributed through a competitive process to states and localities that do not qualify for a formula allocation, or to states, localities, or nonprofit organizations that propose projects of national significance. During FY13, 30 HUD competitive grants were renewed, and in 2014, there are 26 eligible renewals. In FY12, the last year they were awarded, there were seven Special Projects of National Significant (SPNS) grants. This funding went to projects that demonstrated model, replicable approaches to providing permanent or transitional housing assistance. In the competitive program, grantees can distribute funds to projects that provide one or more of the following services: housing information and referral; housing search assistance, shelter or rental assistance; the development or operation of single room occupancy (SRO) housing and other community-based residences; and, technical assistance. HOPWA also provides technical assistance to support sound management in local programs and develop strategies to address HIV/AIDS housing need.

## **FUNDING**

HOPWA remains sorely underfunded relative to the immense need. HOPWA would need \$1.12 billion to serve all those living with HIV/AIDS in need of housing assistance.

In the FY14 Budget, HOPWA received \$330 million dollars. This funding level is a continuation of the FY13 appropriated funding level. While this number represents a significant rollback of some of the sequestration cuts that were seen in the FY13 Operating Budget, it still is not equivalent to the high watermark for funding from the FY11 budget.

For FY15, the National AIDS Housing Coalition (NAHC) requests \$350 million for HOPWA, an increase of \$20 million from the FY14 appropriation. This recommended funding level, while meeting only a fraction of need, would sustain existing programs, permit small program expansions at the local level, and support newly added jurisdictions.

The President's FY15 Budget would fund HOPWA at \$332 million. This is an increase of \$2 million dollars and would allow approximately 52,000 households to be served.

## **FORECAST FOR 2015**

The current economic climate puts those vulnerable low income people with HIV/AIDS at tremendous risk, especially those who are multiply diagnosed with substance abuse, mental illness, or other co-infections.

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy, released in 2010, acknowledges the need to revise the HOPWA formula to better reflect today's epidemic geography. To that end, the Administration recently transmitted to Congress a legislative proposal to update the formula that will include counting living cases of HIV rather than cumulative AIDS cases as in the current formula. This will allow jurisdictions with increasing populations of people living with HIV/AIDS to receive more funding. A housing cost factor and a community need factor area also included. These changes to the HOPWA formula were included in the President's proposal for the FY15 budget.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

National AIDS Housing Coalition, 202-377-0333, [www.nationalaidshousing.org](http://www.nationalaidshousing.org)