

# HIV/AIDS HOUSING **Improving Health Outcomes**

*Incorporate housing interventions as a critical element of HIV health care.*

– Policy Imperative from the NAHC National Housing and HIV/AIDS Research Summit Series



Housing status is one of the strongest predictors of health outcomes for PLWHA: lack of housing is a barrier to care, while increased housing stability enables PLWHA to obtain and adhere to life-saving medical care and antiretroviral therapy.

## HOUSING STATUS PREDICTS HIV TREATMENT SUCCESS OR FAILURE

- ▶ Compared to stably housed PLWHA, homeless persons experience worse overall physical and mental health, are more likely to be hospitalized and use emergency rooms, have lower CD4 counts and higher viral loads, and are less likely to receive and adhere to antiretroviral therapy.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Housing status is a more significant predictor of health outcomes than individual characteristics such as demographics, drug and alcohol use, and receipt of social services, indicating that housing itself improves the health of PLWHA.<sup>2</sup>
- ▶ Lack of housing results in worsening HIV health disparities: 68% of the homeless/unstably housed participants in the HUD/CDC Housing and Health Study had a detectable viral load on entry, yet 44% were not receiving any antiretroviral medications or were on a suboptimal regimen.<sup>3</sup>

## ACCESS TO HOUSING ENABLES PLWHA TO GET INTO CARE AND STAY IN CARE

- ▶ Over time, housing status is among the strongest predictors of entry into HIV care, primary care visits, continuous care, and care that meets clinical practice standards.<sup>4</sup>
- ▶ Receipt of housing assistance has an independent, direct impact on improved medical care.<sup>5</sup>

## STABLE HOUSING RESULTS IN BETTER HEALTH OUTCOMES

- ▶ A random control trial of supportive housing for chronically ill homeless persons showed that PLWHA who received a housing placement were twice as likely at 12 months to have an undetectable viral load as those who did not receive housing.<sup>6</sup>
- ▶ Housing and Health Study participants who secured stable housing reported significant reductions in emergency room visits (34%), hospitalizations (21%) and opportunistic infections (44%) over the 18 month study period.
- ▶ Injection drug users with stable housing were found to be 1.5 times as likely to access highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) than those who lacked housing, and, among those on treatment, those with stable housing were almost 3.7 times as likely to achieve viral suppression.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ Researchers consistently report a significant positive association between improved housing and better HIV-related health status, including CD4 count, viral load, and co-infection with HCV or TB.<sup>8</sup>

## THE NAHC HOUSING AND HIV/AIDS RESEARCH SUMMIT SERIES

Since 2005, the Summit Series has provided an innovative forum for presentation of research on the relationship of housing status to HIV prevention and care, coupled with dialogue on the public policy implications of findings. Researchers, policy makers, providers and consumers work together to develop evidence-based public policy goals and strategies. Summit products include policy papers, an advocacy tool kit, and the November 2007 special "Housing & HIV" issue of the journal *AIDS & Behavior*. NAHC will convene Summit IV on June 3rd–5th, 2009, in Washington, DC, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN). For information on the Summit Series and to read Summit materials, visit [www.nationalaidshousing.org](http://www.nationalaidshousing.org).



# HOUSING IS The Greatest Unmet Need of Persons with HIV/AIDS

“Taken as a whole, the available research makes it readily apparent that access to adequate housing profoundly affects the health of Americans who are at-risk for or living with HIV.”<sup>9</sup>

The CDC estimates that there are currently 1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in the United States, and over 56,000 persons become newly infected each year. AIDS housing experts estimate that about half of all PLWHA—over 500,000 households—will need some form of housing assistance during the course of their illness.

At current funding levels, the federal Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program serves only about 70,000 households per year.

There is not a single county in the US where a person who relies on federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments (\$637 in 2008) can afford even a studio apartment.<sup>10</sup>



## WHAT'S NEEDED A Data-Driven HIV/AIDS Housing Policy Agenda

### RESEARCH FINDINGS SUPPORT FOUR KEY IMPERATIVES FOR A SOUND HIV/AIDS HOUSING POLICY

- Make affordable housing available to all persons with HIV.
- Make housing assistance a top HIV prevention priority.
- Incorporate housing as a critical element of HIV health care.
- Continue to collect the data needed to inform HIV housing policy.

1 Kidder, D., Wolitski, R., Campsmith, M., Nakamura, G. (2007). “Health status, health care use, medication use, and medication adherence in homeless and housed people living with HIV/AIDS.” *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(12): 2238-2245.

2 Id.

3 Kidder, D. (2008). *Factors associated with clinically unacceptable HIV health status in homeless or unstably housed adults living with HIV*. Paper presented at the Third National Housing & HIV/AIDS Research Summit, Baltimore, Maryland.

4 Aidala, A., Lee, G., Abramson, D., Messeri, P. & Siegler, A. (2007). “Housing need, housing assistance, and connection to medical care.” *AIDS & Behavior*, 11(6)/Supp 2: S101-S115.

5 Id.

6 Buchanan, D. (2008). *Chicago Housing for Health Partnership HIV Sub-Study*. Paper presented at the Third National Housing and HIV/AIDS Research Summit, Baltimore, Maryland.

7 Knowlton, A., Arnsten, J., Eldred, L., Wilkinson, J., Gourevitch, M., Shade, S.,

Dowling, K., Purcell, D., and the INSPIRE Team (2006). “Individual, interpersonal, and structural correlates of effective HAART use among urban active injection drug users.” *Journal of Acquired Immunodeficiency Diseases*, 41(4): 486-492.

8 Leaver, et al. (2007). “The effects of housing status on health-related outcomes in people living with HIV: A systematic review of the literature.” *AIDS & Behavior*, 11(6)/Supp 2: S85-S100.

9 Wolitski, R., Kidder, D. & Fenton, F. (2007). “HIV, homelessness, and public health: Critical Issues and a call for increased

action.” *AIDS & Behavior*, 11(6)/Supp 2: S167-S171.

10 *Out of Reach 2007-2008*, National Low Income Housing Coalition ([www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org)).



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