

HIV/AIDS HOUSING Preventing HIV Transmission

Make housing homeless persons a top prevention priority, as housing is a powerful, effective prevention strategy.

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



Research shows that **persons with stable housing are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and more likely to reduce HIV risk** than their counterparts who are homeless/unstably housed, highlighting the potential of housing as a structural intervention to reduce the spread of HIV.

HOUSING STATUS PREDICTS HIV RISK

- ▶ Homeless persons face enormous pressures of daily survival needs that supersede efforts to reduce HIV risk, as well as multiple barriers to risk reduction resources.¹
- ▶ Among persons at highest HIV risk due to injecting drug use or risky sex, those without a home are **significantly more likely to become HIV infected** over time.²
- ▶ Homeless or unstably housed persons are consistently found to be **2 to 6 times more likely to use hard drugs, share needles or engage in high-risk sex** than stably housed persons with the same personal and service use characteristics.³
- ▶ African American and Hispanic homeless women were **2 to 5 times more likely than their housed counterparts to report multiple sex partners** in the last 6 months, in part due to recent victimization by physical violence.⁴

HOUSING IS HIV PREVENTION

- ▶ Over time, **persons who improved their housing status reduced risk behaviors by half**, while persons whose housing status worsened were 4 times as likely to exchange sex.⁵
- ▶ Preliminary results from the HUD/CDC Housing and Health Study show a **40% reduction in sex exchange** over 18 months among homeless/unstably housed PLWHA who secured stable housing.⁶
- ▶ Access to **housing also improves access and adherence to antiretroviral medications**, which lower viral load and reduce the risk of transmission.⁷
- ▶ Proven **risk reduction interventions are less effective among persons who are homeless/unstably housed** than among their housed counterparts—including counseling, needle exchange, and other behavioral interventions.⁸

HOUSING IS A COST EFFECTIVE HIV PREVENTION INTERVENTION

- ▶ **Preventing one new HIV infection in the US saves an estimated \$303,000** in discounted lifetime medical costs.⁹
- ▶ Health and Housing Study cost analyses show that **just 1 transmission per 69 clients must be averted** for the housing intervention studied there to be a cost-effective prevention intervention, and preventing 1 transmission per 19 clients would make the housing investment cost-saving.¹⁰

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.



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.”¹¹

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.¹²



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 Aidala, A. & Sumartojo, E. (2007). "Why housing?" *AIDS & Behavior*, 11(6)/Supp 2: S1-S6.
2 See: 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.
3 Aidala, A., Cross, J., Stall, R., Harre, D., and Sumartojo, E. (2005). "Housing status and HIV risk behaviors: Implications for prevention and policy." *AIDS and Behavior*, 9(3): 251-265; Coady, M., Latka, M., Thiede, H., Golub, E., Ouellet, L., Hudson, S., Kapadia, F., Garfein, R. (2007). "Housing status and associated differences in HIV risk behaviors among young injection drug users (IDUs)." *AIDS and Behavior* 11(6): 854-863; Kipke, M., Weiss, G., Wong, C. (2007). "Residential status as risk factor for drug use and HIV risk among young men who have sex with men." *AIDS*

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4 Wenzel, S., Tucker, J., Elliot, M., Hambarsoomians, K. (2007). "Sexual risk among impoverished women: Understanding the role of housing status." *AIDS & Behavior*, 11(6)/ Supp 2: S9-S20.
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10 Holtgrave, D., Briddell, K., Little, E., Bendixen, A., Hooper, M., Kidder, D., Wolitski, R., Harre, D., Royal, S., Aidala, A. (2007). "Cost and threshold analysis of housing as an HIV prevention intervention." *AIDS and Behavior* 11(6)/Supp 2: S-62-S166.
11 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.
12 *Out of Reach 2007-2008*, National Low Income Housing Coalition (www.nlihc.org).



THE NATIONAL AIDS HOUSING COALITION

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