



HOUSING AND HEALTH CONNECTION: HOUSING SERVICES AT AIDS ACTION Public Health Division of Fenway Health

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AGENDA

- Homelessness and Health: Impact of Housing on Health
- Overview of Housing Services at AIDS Action
- Overview of Housing First
- Q&A

HOUSING IMPACTS HEALTH

Housing is Health

Treatment as Prevention

U=U

IMPACT OF HOUSING ACCESS ON HEALTH

- Stable housing has a demonstrated impact on the health outcomes of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA).
- Clients who are homeless or unstably housed are more likely to be delayed in diagnosis and linkage to care, and less likely to be retained in care and virally suppressed.
- Among people diagnosed with HIV and substance use disorder, those experiencing homelessness have 92% more ED visits and 113% more inpatient admissions.
- Among PLWH, 50% will experience housing instability post-HIV diagnosis.

CLINICAL AND COMMUNITY LINKAGES

 AIDS ACTION

- Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) and Health-Related Social Needs (HRSN) are increasingly present in conversations about program planning, policy and funding
- Those serving and treating individuals living with HIV have been focused on SDoH and the importance of the connection between the clinical and community space for decades!
- Referrals and ongoing case coordination require close partnerships with providers based in clinical settings
- Housing as presenting need – being client-centered can mean addressing HRSNs before medical needs

HOUSING NEED

- **Boston area is consistently in the top 5 least affordable, highest rent metro areas in the country**
- Working with households with income under the Low Income guideline – and often under the Extremely Low Income guideline: market rate rentals and home ownership are rarely available options
- Clients seeking subsidized and affordable housing; long-term and short-term rental assistance
- Lack of affordability leads to lack of stability: periods of literal homelessness, frequent moves, prolonged periods of extreme rent burden, threats of eviction and displacement
- Lack of housing stability is a barrier to healthcare access, consistency of care, and medication adherence (HIV meds and others)

FRAMEWORK FOR SERVICES

Harm reduction

Housing first

Client-Centered Goals

Informed decision making

Stages of Change Awareness

OVERVIEW OF FENWAY HEALTH & AIDS ACTION

OUR MISSION: Fenway Health advocates for and delivers innovative, equitable, accessible health care, supportive services, and transformative research and education. We center LGBTQIA+ people, BIPOC individuals, and other underserved communities to enable our local, national, and global neighbors to flourish. AIDS Action is the Public Health arm of Fenway Health, focusing on social determinants of health such as housing stability.

- **Housing Services - search, stabilization, financial assistance**
- **Public Health**
- **Social Determinants of Health**
- **HIV/STI Prevention & Linkage to Care**



OVERVIEW OF AIDS ACTION COMMITTEE

- AIDS Action services:
 - Housing Search
 - Rental Assistance
 - Supportive Housing
 - Navigation and Linkage to Care
 - Legal
 - Access: Drug User Health Program
 - Sexual Health: outreach and testing

- AIDS Action locations:
 - 75 Amory St.
 - 359 Green St.
 - Harvard Square

HOUSING DEPARTMENT AT A GLANCE

 AIDS ACTION

Serving households:

- living in Massachusetts
- living with HIV or at high risk
- meets low income guidelines

Program areas: Housing Search, Rental Assistance, Supportive Housing, and Navigation

Total annual budget: ~\$5M

Payments for financial assistance (rent, utilities): 40% of overall budget

10 funders

20 budgets

34 people: staff, co-ops, interns, volunteers



CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS: HOUSING PROGRAMS

 AIDS ACTION

Serve approximately **1200** clients annually

76% of clients identify as BIPOC

31% of clients have a preferred language other than English

30% of clients were born outside the U.S.

79% of clients are 35 -64 years-old

Reported mode of HIV infection

- **42%** heterosexual sex

- **11%** IDU

- **26%** MSM

38% of clients identify as LGBTQIA+

HOUSING SEARCH SERVICES – WHAT WE DO

We offer a range of services to those facing housing insecurity.

Who we serve:

- Homeless (in shelter/on street)
- Rent burdened
- Accessibility needs
- Fleeing domestic violence

What we do:

- Housing search
- Housing viewings/screenings
- Linkage to safety net programs
- Financial assistance

HOUSING SEARCH & ADVOCACY TEAM

Housing Search & Advocacy: Clients are referred by external and internal Medical Case Managers for assistance obtaining affordable housing, eviction prevention, denials/appeals and reasonable accommodation requests, in collaboration with our Legal department. Housing Search groups are held weekly at our Cambridge and Amory Street locations. Check out the HSA weekly blog (www.aac.org/hsa)!

Voucher Based Housing Search: Assists clients referred internally and externally with locating and securing apartments for individuals with a tenant based rental assistance voucher (TBRA).

RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- Serves approximately **600 clients** annually
- Referrals from **60+ partner agencies** statewide
- Homelessness Prevention Program
- Rental Start-Up Program
- Utility Assistance Program
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Ongoing housing subsidies
- RAP Navigation



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Case Managers provide wrap-around services to clients including:

- Linkage to medical care and treatment
- Accompaniment to medical and housing appointments
- Applying and recertifying for the HIV Drug Assistance Program,
- MassHealth and Ryan White Dental
- Assisting with housing search and recertification
- Eviction prevention
- Referrals to AAC's Legal department and external Legal providers
- Connecting to benefits such as TAFDC/EAEDC, SNAP, SSI and SSDI
- Employment and Educational services

TYPES OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **Subsidized Housing:** Housing subsidies are streams of government funding that allow for a household to pay 30-40% of their gross income towards rent. Subsidies can be “deep” or “shallow”.
 - Public Housing: Housing owned and operated by a housing authority (e.g. Boston Housing Authority, Cambridge Housing authority). Subsidy is attached to the unit. When the individual moves, they lose the subsidy.
 - Mobile Voucher: A mobile voucher is a subsidy that allows a household to search for housing in the private market (Section 8, MRVP, AHVP). The subsidy is attached to the person, so as long as they remain eligible, they keep the subsidy no matter where they live.
- **Low Income Housing Tax Credits:** LITHC are units that are typically in newer developments with regularly priced units. These units are subsidized below market, making it more affordable, however, rent is not based on a households income, but is a reduced, fixed amount. This is an example of a “shallow” subsidy.

TYPES OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **Continuum of Care:** Continuum of Care (CoC) is a federally funded grant program that can either be vouchers or project based. Agencies or nonprofits serving homeless populations are allowed to create criteria for the program in order to target vulnerable homeless populations based on specific community need. This is a large umbrella program funded by HUD that covers many programs. CoC housing programs generally come with stabilization services due to its focus on higher need, long term homeless individuals. These are typically administered and run by City/Town governments who create a coordinated entry system to match homeless individuals in their community to these resources.

HOUSING SEARCH RESOURCES

- C.H.A.M.P.S. – State aided housing application
- MA Housing Navigator
- Mass Housing
- Metro Housing Boston – this is a good resource for households searching with a mobile voucher
- Cambridge Housing Authority
- Boston Metrolist
- MassAccess Housing Registry – great resource for households with accessibility needs

HOUSING FIRST

- **Housing First is an approach to homelessness services that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life.** This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance use issues.
 - Practical applications of the Housing Search Model:
 - Sobriety is not a requirement to access services
 - Adherence to treatment for mental or physical conditions is not a requirement
 - No income requirements
 - Barriers to providing Housing First Services:
 - Up against systems that do not adhere to Housing First Principles
 - Setbacks due to individual choices
 - Frustration on behalf of advocates

HOUSING ADVOCACY

There is a lot of housing and homelessness advocacy work happening at the State and local level. Opportunities to get involved in this work are below:

- Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless: <https://mahomeless.org/>
- Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness:
<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/interagency-council-on-housing-and-homelessness>
- Citizens Housing and Planning Association: <https://www.chapa.org/>
- Federal Advocacy Agencies:
- National Low Income Housing Coalition: <https://nlihc.org/>
- National Alliance to End Homelessness: <https://endhomelessness.org/>

REFERENCE LINKS

- [C.H.A.M.P.S.](#) – State aided housing application
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- [MassAccess Housing Registry](#) – great resource for households with accessibility needs
- [Housing First](#)

QUESTIONS?

