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To: HOPWA-L@HUDLIST.HUD.GOV

Subject: HOPWA In Focus: Pride Month 2024

HOPWA In Focus: Pride Month 2024

Dear HOPWA Grantees, Project Sponsors, and Friends,

This June, HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH) joins the LGBTQ+ community in celebrating Pride Month. As many of you know, Pride Month marks the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising and a pivotal moment for the Gay Liberation Movement. Since then, Pride Month has served as a time of great reflection, celebration, and advocacy. OHH is excited to join in these celebrations and to rejoice in the advancements made by the LGBTQ+ community. At the same time, OHH is keenly aware of the disproportionate impact that the HIV epidemic has on the LGBTQ+ community and the unique barriers that make it difficult for this community to access housing. We acknowledge the road ahead and recommit ourselves to ensuring equity and inclusion within the HOPWA program.

OHH believes housing is a key component in combatting the HIV epidemic and in helping individuals reach stability and viral load suppression. OHH understands that to end the HIV epidemic there must be a coordinated community effort which requires engaging people with lived experience and expertise (PLEE) at all stages. That is why this month and every month, OHH seeks to make equity and inclusion the cornerstone of the HOPWA program. In February, we held our [People with Lived Experiences and Expertise \(PLEE\) webinar](#) that provided participants with best practices and strategies to improve meaningful PLEE engagement. This webinar was the result of the HOPWA Race, Gender, and LGBTQ+ Equity Initiative which brought together seven communities to conduct a review of HOPWA program activities through an equity lens, including planning, operations, client outreach, and inclusion of people with lived experience. Through this initiative, technical assistance (TA) providers and HOPWA grantees identified and brought on PLEE to be equal partners in initiative planning and development for HOPWA programming. We kicked off 2024 with a 2nd cohort of five communities and are looking forward to learning more and improving the HOPWA program through meaningful engagement of PLEE. Last year, the HOPWA Equity team also sponsored a webinar, [Supporting and Housing Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming \(GNC\) People in Your HOPWA Program](#), that brought awareness to the significant barriers, housing and non-housing related, that are present for transgender and gender non-conforming persons. LGBTQ+ encapsulates multiple identities and lived experiences and it is our commitment to ensure that HOPWA programming is reflective of this diversity. These webinars provide opportunities for HOPWA program stakeholders to expand their knowledge and cultural humility to better serve the diverse community, including LGBTQ+ members, that make up the HOPWA program.

OHH collaborates with Federal partners who are dedicated to working together to end the HIV epidemic. These federal partnerships enable OHH to harness the power of different agencies and experts to bring forth coordinated initiatives to better address the communities we serve. This also includes remaining responsive to new, emerging

community acquired infections that disproportionately affect the LGBTQ+ community, such as mpox and syphilis. Viruses like mpox can affect anyone, but we have seen a disproportionate number of cases among the LGBTQ+ community. Immunocompromised individuals, such as people with HIV, are more at risk for developing severe complications from mpox— that is why mpox vaccination remains a vital step in taking care of yourself and maintaining your health. OHH is actively coordinating with Summer of Pride, an initiative born out of the 2022 mpox outbreak, that continues to do work to address health disparities through direct outreach to LGBTQ+ community organizations. We are proud of assisting with Summer of Pride and are committed to working across the Federal government to ensure we are meeting communities where they are and addressing new emerging needs.

We encourage HOPWA providers and stakeholders to use Pride Month as a call to action to examine ways to be more inclusive and equitable to the LGBTQ+ community throughout the year. In addition to engaging with Pride celebrations within your community, here are some actionable steps and suggestions:

- Be a part of the progress toward LGBTQ+ equality. Actualize the protections and advances that have been made in legislation and use your voice to identify where these protections fall short.
- Partner with local LGBTQ+ organizations. Partnership between HOPWA providers and LGBTQ+ organizations can be mutually beneficial by providing referrals between organizations, sharing knowledge and training on subject matter expertise, and opening up resources to community members in need of assistance.
- Provide cultural humility training opportunities for staff at your organization to be aware, understand, and respect values, attitudes, beliefs, and mores that differ across cultures and communities.
- Review your organization's policies and procedures to ensure they are aligned with the Equal Access Rule. The Equal Access Rule was reaffirmed in Spring 2021 and ensures that all individuals have equal access to HUD programs, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. For more information on the Equal Access Rule, visit the [LGBTQIA+ Fair Housing Toolkit](#).
- Share your gender pronouns in your email signature and introductions. Typical gender pronouns are "she" or "him" or "they". Pronouns help to identify people instead of just using that person's name and most of us use them in our daily life.
- Take steps to begin establishing your organization as a safe space for LGBTQ+ staff members and clients. Use your voice to identify challenges and barriers that impact the LGBTQ+ community.

OHH takes LGBTQ+ Pride Month as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the LGBTQ+ community and to continue to work to increase equitable access for HUD-assisted housing and services. We acknowledge and express immense gratitude for the efforts made by the LGBTQ+ community to spearhead HIV policy across the federal government and within local communities since the beginning of the HIV epidemic. We reiterate the important role that housing plays in fighting the HIV epidemic and in ensuring the safety and dignity among this community. Lastly, we want to thank our

community of grantees and project sponsors who join in our mission of supporting the HOPWA program and ending the HIV epidemic. Happy Pride Month!

Respectfully,

Rita Harcrow
Director, Office of HIV/AIDS Housing



Housing is a structural intervention in ending the HIV epidemic in the United States. Each year, HOPWA ensures housing stability for more than 100,000 American households that are low-income and living with HIV.

Want to know more about HOPWA? Go to
https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/hopwa

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