

From: Hopwa <Hopwa@hud.gov>
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To: HOPWA-L@HUDLIST.HUD.GOV
Subject: HOPWA In Focus: Recognizing Mental Health Awareness Month

HOPWA In Focus: Recognizing Mental Health Awareness Month

Dear HOPWA Grantees, Project Sponsors, and Friends,

The US is currently in the midst of a nationwide mental health crisis that has been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, we would like to share information on mental health challenges that people living with HIV (PLWH) may experience and highlight information on resources available through the HOPWA program to support clients' mental health.

Living with HIV can have a negative impact on one's mental health. According to [the National Institute of Mental Health](#), PLWH may also face unique experiences that can require additional mental health support. These include loss of social support and increased social isolation due to HIV status, trauma from stigma or discrimination, and grief from the loss of friends or community members from HIV. Individuals in this population are also at higher risk for behavioral health conditions such as depression and anxiety, substance use disorder, and trauma disorders. Older adults living with HIV are also at higher risk for neurocognitive disorders as they age, according to some [studies](#).

PLWH also experience unique barriers to accessing mental health services, according to [TargetHIV](#). For instance, PLWH may have a lack of trust in the medical establishment due to previous traumatic or negative experiences. Additionally, PLWH may experience discrimination or stigma due to their HIV status when reaching out for mental health support. Further, a lack of health insurance coverage for mental healthcare or the high cost of services may deter PLWH from accessing mental health support due to a lack of affordability. Housing access is also a key determinant of mental health for PLWH, with [significant findings](#) indicating that homeless or housing insecure PLWH experience poorer mental health outcomes than stably housed individuals.

HOPWA program funding can be used to support client access to mental health services in accordance with a client's individual housing and service plan. The HOPWA statute specifically authorizes coverage for mental health services and grantees/project sponsors may use their grant funds to provide these services in the form of assessment and treatment of mental health conditions by licensed professionals, including individual, family, or group therapy. As part of case management, grantees and project sponsors may also connect clients to agencies in their community that specialize in mental health treatment and support.

HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS Housing is committed to promoting access to mental health services for HOPWA program clients and ensuring grantees have the tools and information needed to increase access to these essential resources for PLWH. For more information on our federal partners' activities to support individuals with mental illness and promote equitable access to mental healthcare this month, visit the [SAMHSA website](#).

Thank you for your continued support of the HOPWA program and your work to improve housing stability and health outcomes for low-income PLWH and their families.

Respectfully,
Rita Harcrow
Director, Office of HIV/AIDS Housing



Housing is a structural intervention in ending the AIDS 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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