Columbus County, OH

PROGRAM:

Status Neutral Housing Program - HOME (Housing, Outreach, Motivation, and Engagement)

INTRODUCTION:

The HOME program is designed to provide emergency financial assistance to prevent homelessness and establish permanent housing for people living with HIV (PLWH) and those at increased risk of HIV. Established in a housing-first model, this initiative recognizes that stable housing is essential for achieving and maintaining positive health outcomes, such as viral suppression or remaining HIV-negative.

TARGET POPULATION:

This initiative serves a diverse and key vulnerable populations:

- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latinx
- People living with HIV (PLWH)
- Transgender and nonbinary individuals

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND COLLABORATORS:

The program was made possible through collaborations with following key stakeholders:

- Columbus Public Health
- Community- Based Organizations (CBOs)

PROGRAM DURATION:

The Status Neutral Housing Program - HOME (Housing, Outreach, Motivation, and Engagement) has been operational for less than six months.

PROGRAM GOALS AND KEY ACTIVITIES:

The primary goal of the HOME program is to stabilize housing for individuals at risk of or living with HIV, ensuring that clients can maintain viral suppression or remain HIV negative. Operating within a housing first model, the program provides financial support for rent, utilities, and other housing related costs as outlined in the Housing Service category under PCN 16-02. Clients also have access to a range of supportive services, including care coordination, case management, addiction services, HIV treatment, and PrEP. The program's care coordinators connect clients to community resources such as healthcare, employment, legal aid, transportation, governmental benefits, and beyond.

Additionally, the subrecipient agency is exploring strategies to increase the number of landlords willing to accept third-party payments, broadening housing options for clients and ensuring that a greater number of individuals have access to stable housing.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES:

As the HOME program is still in its pilot phase, challenges are still being assessed.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT:

While Columbus Public Health did not directly engage the community in the development and implementation of the HOME program, the subrecipient agency's experience and connections with the priority populations were instrumental in designing the initiative. The subrecipient agency specializes in particular priority populations and has a HOPWA program in addition to being connected through other short-term housing options like shelter and medical respite. Their direct ties to HIV prevention and care services allowed for better integration of housing and healthcare needs.

DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING:

The program uses CAREWare to track data for HIV-positive clients and Excel for HIV-negative clients. Monthly data submissions are required by the 15th, and the EHE epidemiologists at Columbus Public Health review the submissions to ensure all fields are complete and accurate. Collected data includes client-level information, client needs, last HIV test (if applicable), referrals made, and housing outcomes. Trends are monitored to assess the program's effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

KEY METRICS AND OUTCOMES:

The program tracks a range of key performance indicators to measure its success:

- Number of clients enrolled (housing services provided)
- Number of clients virally suppressed
- Number of clients on PrEP

CONCLUSION:

The HOME program exemplifies how a housing-first model can support individuals living with or at risk for HIV by addressing the critical link between housing stability and health outcomes. Through strong collaboration with a specialized subrecipient and ongoing program refinement, the initiative ensures that clients receive not only financial support for housing but also access to comprehensive care services. As the program moves forward, key efforts will focus on expanding landlord partnerships and refining program delivery to meet the needs of vulnerable populations in Columbus County.

NASTAD