



Harlem United Community AIDS Center

Recommendations to the Affordable Housing Workgroup of the Medicaid Redesign Team

Submitted by Steve Bussey, CEO

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1. Issue/Barrier: The fact that supportive housing is permanent is an advantage to tenants but can be a weakness of the system (e.g. once someone moves in they can stay forever). Because of a lack of affordable housing, few supportive housing tenants ever move on.

Solution: Require all publicly-funded affordable housing developments to include supportive units. This can be taken a step further whereby current supportive housing tenants are given priority status for a portion of regular affordable units in all publicly-funded affordable housing. This would allow supportive housing tenants who are ready for greater independence to move on, thus freeing up resources for others.

2. Issue/Barrier: The development of NYNYIII congregate housing is significantly behind schedule. There are many barriers with developing new congregate housing: the length of time needed to develop new congregate housing is significant (approx 5 years).

Solution: Significant funding is needed upfront to build new housing and many congregate housing sites tend to be located in high-crime neighborhoods without a lot of amenities, essentially segregating clients from the greater community. .

3. Issue/Barrier: Unlike other populations, HASA-eligible clients have access to HASA rent subsidies which are portable.

Solution: HASA should update (increase) the rent payment limits they will approve (not updated since 2003).

4. Issue/Barrier: NIMBYism (not-in-my-backyard) a barrier.

Solution: All government agencies that fund supportive housing in New York must take a stronger leadership role with citing and community resistance by articulating publicly the effectiveness of supportive housing, encouraging community support of new programs, and advocating for supportive housing as a key public health intervention.

5. Issue: HIV state enhanced rental assistance program has no cap on tenant contributions.

Solution: Include language from (A.6275/S.4098) in the 2011 Education, Labor and Family Assistance Article VII budget bill to prevent homelessness for New Yorkers permanently disabled by HIV/AIDS and their families.

This legislation proposes to enact a 30% rent cap affordable housing protection for clients of the HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) who already receive a rental subsidy. The bill does not create a new program or expand eligibility for existing supports. It is a simple fix to make a successful program work better. This legislation would correct HASA's rental assistance program by aligning it with all other low-income housing programs available in New York and the federal HUD standard for affordable housing.

It is important to note that the bill is cost-neutral without even taking into account expected savings in health costs attributable to avoidable emergency and acute care among unstably housed PLWHA, and prevented HIV infections. By averting just a third of emergency housing placements by keeping disabled PLWHA in their own affordable housing, the bill will pay for itself. Savings multiply as additional HIV-related health costs and new infections are prevented.