**STATE OF ALABAMA**

**HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH AIDS (HOPWA) PROGRAM**

**PY2021 ONE-YEAR ANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

**Introduction**

HIV/AIDS represents a significant public health issue in the United States with an estimated 1.1 million individuals currently living with the virus (CDC, 2019). There were 38,739 new cases of HIV diagnosed in the U.S. in 2017 with 52% (or 19,968) of all new diagnoses being made in the southern region (CDC, 2018). In the same year, there were 13,299 individuals living with HIV in Alabama and 656 individuals newly diagnosed (ADPH, 2019). Approximately 44% of Alabamians living with HIV have progressed to Stage 3 (AIDS) disease and the health department estimates that there may be as many as 2,777 undocumented cases of HIV infection in the state (ADPH, 2017). The highest number of new HIV cases in Alabama are found in the urban counties of Jefferson, Mobile, Montgomery, Madison, and Tuscaloosa, but a disproportionately high percentage of new HIV cases are being diagnosed in rural parts of the state (ADPH, 2017).

HIV/AIDS disproportionately affects African-Americans, men who have sex with men (MSM), and young adults. In 2017, African-Americans made up only 13% of the U.S. population but represented 42% of new HIV diagnoses nationally (CDC, 2019). The picture in Alabama is similar. African-Americans comprise 27% of the state’s population but account for 64% of all HIV-positive individuals (ADPH, 2017). African-American males represent 52% of all newly diagnosed HIV cases in Alabama, and the HIV incidence rate for African-Americans was nearly six times that of Caucasians (ADPH, 2017). According to the CDC, 66% of all new HIV diagnoses in 2017 were among the MSM population with male-to-male sexual contact being the most common form of HIV transmission (CDC, 2019). Male-to-male sexual contact accounted for 68% of all new HIV transmission in Alabama in 2017 (ADPH). Young adults between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine account for 44% of Alabama’s new HIV infections each year, which represents a downward shift in age at diagnosis across the State since 2008 (ADPH, 2017). Young adult men of color represented the most affected sub-population with regards to HIV, and there has been a 12% increase in the rates of HIV among gay and bisexual Hispanic men in recent years (CDC, 2019).

There is a significant relationship between HIV and poverty in the United States. Communities with large income gaps and high rates of psychosocial disadvantage among minority populations experience disproportionately high rates of HIV infections (Pellowski et al, 2014). Improving HIV-related health disparities requires communities and health providers to address the social and structural barriers to health and healthcare (Pellowski et al, 2014). Access to stable, affordable housing for individuals living with HIV/AIDS and their families is one such structural barrier that has been shown, when addressed, to improve individual HIV health outcomes and to reduce the rates of transmission within the community (Aidala et al, 2016).

The Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Program is an important component of the safety network for low-income, HIV-positive Americans. Stable housing for People Living with HIV (PLWH) has been linked with improved HIV-related clinical markers, increased rates of antiretroviral therapy adherence, and longer life-expectancy (Aidala et al, 2016). Stable housing is also associated with higher rates of HIV primary care utilization and with lower rates of HIV-related emergency department visits and inpatient admissions (Aidala et al, 2016). Finally, improved housing circumstances for HIV-positive individuals have been shown to reduce HIV risk behaviors (including sexual and drug-related behaviors) and to reduce the likelihood of forward transmission of the virus (Aidala et al, 2016).

In 2015, AIDS Alabama coordinated a statewide needs assessment of individuals living with HIV in the State. Interviews were completed with four hundred ninety-eight HIV-positive individuals across the state as part of the needs assessment, and 10% of individuals were found to have no source of income. Additionally, 52% of respondents reported that their primary source of income was from SSI, and 36% of respondents received food benefits. Of the individuals interviewed, 21% reported experiencing some degree of housing insecurity within the previous six months and 12% reported moving three or more times in the previous three years. At the time of this needs assessment, African-American males and females were at an increased risk for housing instability, and 20% of respondents had experienced problems with housing. These findings demonstrate widespread economic disadvantage among the HIV-positive population in Alabama and underscore the need for HOPWA services across the state.

**HOPWA Service Coordination**

AIDS Alabama facilitates the Alabama HOPWA Program through a partnership with the member organizations that make up the AIDS Service Organization Network of Alabama (ASONA). There are currently nine members of ASONA located in regional hubs throughout the State. This partnership allows for the extension of HOPWA service to all regions of the State and to individuals living in each of the State’s 67 counties. Each of the nine ASONA member organizations participates in the statewide needs assessments compiles programmatic data, and participates in developing the protocols used to administer HOPWA funds. AIDS Alabama will only make changes to the HOPWA rental assistance program after receiving input from all partnership organizations, providing at minimum a 30-day notice of change to each agency and ensuring that all changes are HUD compliant.

Below is a list of the ASONA membership agencies providing HOPWA services throughout Alabama:

* AIDS Alabama, Inc.-Birmingham, AL
* AIDS Alabama South-Mobile, AL
* Birmingham AIDS Outreach-Birmingham, AL
* Five Horizons Health Center-Tuscaloosa,
* Health Services Center-Anniston, AL
* Medical Advocacy and Outreach-Montgomery, AL
* Selma AIDS Information and Referral-Selma, AL
* Thrive Alabama, Inc.-Huntsville, AL
* Unity Wellness Center-Auburn, AL

**Summary of Client Services**

AIDS Alabama and the other ASONA membership agencies provide the following housing related services to HIV-positive individuals and their families across Alabama:

**I. Rental Assistance**

AIDS Alabama and its partner organizations facilitate three rental assistance programs across the state for the purpose of assisting clients to achieve and maintain stable housing. Descriptions of each of the programs follow:

a) **Short-Term Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Assistance (STRMU)** provides assistance to households facing a crisis or housing emergency that could result in displacement from their current housing situation or that could result in homelessness. In order to receive STRMU assistance, qualified individuals must work with a case manager to develop a housing plan designed to increase self-sufficiency and to avoid homelessness.

b) **Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)** provides ongoing financial assistance paid to a tenant’s landlord to cover the difference between fair market rents and what the tenant can afford to pay. Tenants find their own units and may continue receiving the rental assistance as long as their income remains below the qualifying income standard and other eligibility criteria are met. In order to receive TBRA assistance, the individual must have a long-term housing plan to pursue Section 8 or other permanent, mainstream housing options.

c) **Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA**) offers low-income individuals with HIV/AIDS the opportunity to occupy housing units that have been developed and maintained specifically to meet the growing need for low-income units for this population.

**II. Short Term/Emergency Housing**

a) AIDS Alabama operates an emergency shelter for individuals living with HIV who are receiving substance abuse treatment through the Living in Balance Chemical Addiction Program.

b) AIDS Alabama is in the process of purchasing land adjacent to our Ensley, AL Campus with the potential goal of increasing our Short Term/Emergency Housing options for individuals living with HIV.

**III. Living in Balance Chemical Addiction Program (LIBCAP)**

AIDS Alabama operates the LIBCAP to provide treatment and recovery services to adults who are HIV-positive and who have a chemical addiction problem. LIBCAP operates as an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) and accepts referrals for individuals living across Alabama.

**IV. Permanent Housing**

Permanent housing is available to HIV-positive individuals throughout Alabama and includes the following:

a) **Agape House and Agape II** offer permanent, apartment complex living in Birmingham for persons with HIV/AIDS. There are 25 one-bedroom units, three two-bedroom units, and two three-bedroom units in these two complexes.

b) **Magnolia Place** is located in Mobile and offers 14 two-bedroom units and a one-bedroom unit.

c) **The Mustard Seed** triplex offers three one-bedroom units in Birmingham.

d) **Alabama Rural AIDS Project (ARAP)** is a permanent supportive housing program that provides 13 units of housing in rural areas of the state through the use of TBRA vouchers. An additional house in Dadeville is also used for the project.

f) **The Rapid Re-Housing and Ascension Project** offers rapid re-housing services to homeless clientele. Though the program is not limited to HIV-positive individuals, the program continues to primarily serve this population.

g) **The LeTransclusive Project** offers permanent supportive housing to trans-identified and/or adults living with HIV who are chronically homeless clientele. Though the program is not limited to HIV-positive individuals, the program continues to serve this population almost exclusively.

h) AIDS Alabama is in the process of purchasing land adjacent to our Ensley, AL Campus with the potential goal of increasing our permanent housing options for individuals living with HIV.

**V. Service Enriched Housing**

Service Enriched Housing is available to HIV-positive individuals from across the state who meet the program criteria. These programs include:

a) **JASPER House** is located in Birmingham, AL, and offers 14 beds in a single room occupancy model for persons who are unable to live independently due to their dual HIV and mental illness diagnoses. All occupants are low-income. The program is funded through HUD as a HOPWA Competitive grant and is certified as an Adult Residential Care facility by the Alabama Department of Mental Health.

**HOPWA Funding and Resource Allocation**

The HUD PY2021 HOPWA Fund allocation to the State of Alabama is $2,514,357. Given the preceding statistics and needs represented, AIDS Alabama will use the PY2021 HOPWA funds for the following activities in support of the client programs outlined above:

1. Short Term Rental Mortgage and Utility Assistance

2. Tenant Based Rental Assistance

3. Facility Based Housing Subsidy - Permanent Housing

4. Facility Based Housing Subsidy - Transitional/Short Term Facilities

5. Supportive Services (including case management, support staff, housing outreach, and transportation)

6. Resource Identification

7. Housing Information

8. Technical Assistance

9. Administration.

**Each of these programs is defined in more detail below:**

**1. Short Term Rental Mortgage and Utility (STRMU) Assistance:**

Goal #1: To support a statewide Short Term Rental Mortgage and Utility (STRMU) assistance program through qualified AIDS Service Organizations.

Objective 1: Provide 50 households with emergency Short-Term Rent/Mortgage and Utility (STRMU) assistance between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022.

Outcome: At least 35 households will maintain stable housing and avoid homelessness because of temporary emergency situations.

Outcome: The network of AIDS Service Organizations that has formed will be maintained, ensuring any eligible Alabama resident access to HOPWA assistance.

AIDS Alabama and its ASONA partner agencies will use $111,612 to fund Short-Term Rental Mortgage Utility (STRMU) assistance on an as-needed basis across the state. Individuals will access this program by visiting AIDS Alabama or one of the eight partnering AIDS Service Organizations to complete an application with a HOPWA-certified staff member.

**2. Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA):**

Goal #2: To support a statewide Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program through qualified AIDS Service Organizations.

Objective 1: Provide 100 households with long-term, Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) between April 1, 2021and March 31, 2022.

Outcome: At least 100 households will be assisted so that consumers can remain in affordable, leased housing and experience housing stability.

Outcome: The network of AIDS Service Organizations that has formed will be maintained, ensuring any eligible Alabama resident access to HOPWA assistance.

AIDS Alabama will use $500,000 to fund Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) on an as-needed basis to individuals across the state. Individuals will access this program by visiting AIDS Alabama or one of the eight partnering AIDS Service Organizations to complete an application with a HOPWA-certified staff member.

**3. Facility Based Housing Subsidy Permanent Housing:**

Goal #3: Support permanent housing through facility based housing subsidy.

Objective: AIDS Alabama will use $600,000 to subsidize the cost of permanent housing units between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022, serving a potential 100 PLWH and their families statewide. These funds cover furnishings, utility supplements, property management expenditures (lawn care, basic maintenance, and repair), security services, and support to ensure appropriate upkeep for all HIV-specific, permanent housing in the state as described in the previous section.

Outcome: All current residents in the various AIDS Alabama permanent housing programs will enjoy safe, secure, and stable housing.

**4. Facility Based Housing Subsidy Transitional/Short Term Housing:**

Goal #4: Support transitional/short term housing through facility based housing subsidy.

Objective: AIDS Alabama will use $125,000 to subsidize the cost of the transitional units between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022, serving a potential 80 PLWH and their families statewide. These funds cover furnishings, utility supplements, property management expenditures (lawn care, basic maintenance, and repair), security services, and support to ensure appropriate upkeep for all HIV-specific, transitional/short term housing in the state as described in the previous section.

Outcome: All current residents in the various AIDS Alabama facility based and short term housing will enjoy safe, secure, and stable housing.

**5. Supportive Services:**

Goal #5: Provide existing housing programs in the state with supportive services.

Objective 1: Provide 20,000 legs of transportation to social service and medical appointments between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022.

Outcome: Transportation to mainstream support services promotes healthier and more socially connected consumers who can live independently and remain in stable housing.

Objective 2: Provide case management and support services to 4,000 consumers statewide between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022.

Outcome: Consumers will be linked to mainstream resources that allow them to remain in stable housing and to live independently.

AIDS Alabama will use $806,309 to support housing programs in the state. This support will include supportive services such as transportation, case management, first month’s rent and deposit (if available), and housing outreach. AIDS Alabama will provide these services in the Birmingham Metropolitan Area and to the areas in their Public Health area. The eight ASONA partner organizations will provide these services in the other regions of the state.

**6. Resource Identification:**

Goal #6: Support resource identification efforts.

Objective 1: AIDS Alabama will spend $90,000 between April 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022, to support collaboration among housing and HIV-positive service partners across the state in order to identify low-income housing and housing development efforts.

Specific actions include:

a) Attend 100% of the appropriate HIV/AIDS housing and homelessness conferences.

b) Support the cost of meetings to foster collaborations that will expand affordable housing for low-income, HIV-positive consumers within the state housing organizations (e.g. the Low Income Housing Coalition of Alabama, Alabama Rural Coalition on Homelessness, and Alabama Poverty Project).

c) Explore the availability of possible land and/or buildings for purchase in the Mobile, AL area with the goal of expanding the HIV-related housing stock in that area of the State.

Outcome: AIDS Alabama staff members and contractors will be equipped to provide identification of low-income housing and housing development options with appropriate support services in the state for individuals and families living with HIV disease.

**7. Housing Information:**

Goal #7: Support ongoing housing information dissemination efforts across the state.

Objective: AIDS Alabama will use $25,000 to provide 2,500 individuals with HIV/AIDS housing information in a variety of venues, including: health fairs, trade day events, HIV-awareness events, churches, non-traditional medical clinics, community clubs, shelters, substance abuse programs, beauty shops, jails, prisons, schools, and through other community service providers statewide between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022.

Outcome: HIV-positive individuals in counties throughout the state will know how to find stable and affordable housing resources.

**8. Technical Assistance:**

Goal #8: Provide technical assistance and training around housing programs and development in Alabama.

Objective: AIDS Alabama will use $5,000 to provide/receive at least two consultations and technical assistance sessions to/for ASONA member agencies who are engaged in specific, qualified projects between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022.

Outcome: Two consultations related to housing development programming will be provided to ASONA members to encourage and promote the development of additional housing services for HIV-positive individuals across the state.

**9. Administration:**

The fee for administration of the HOPWA program will be $251,436 (10% per regulations). The state service agency (ADECA) will receive $75,431 (3%) as the grantee, and the project sponsor (AIDS Alabama) will receive $176,005 (7%).

AIDS Alabama will draw on its committed sources of leverage in order to increase the capacity of the HOWPA program. Leveraged dollars come from Medicaid Targeted Case Management revenue, Ryan White case management billing, private foundation grants, other HUD grants, tenant rent payments, collaborations with the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and program income. These funding sources allow AIDS Alabama to stretch limited fiscal resources while continuing to provide quality supportive housing services to HIV-positive individuals across Alabama.

**Proposed PY 2021HOPWA State Budget**

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| **Short Term Rental Mortgage and Utility (STRMU) Assistance** | $111,612 |
| **Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)** | $500,000 |
| **Facility Based Housing Subsidy Permanent Housing** | $600,000 |
| **Facility Based Housing Subsidy Transitional/Short Term Housing** | $125,000 |
| **Resource Identification** | $90,000 |
| **Supportive Services** | $806,309 |
| **Housing Information** | $25,000 |
| **Technical Assistance** | $5,000 |
| **Project Sponsor Administration** (7% AIDS Alabama) | $176,005 |
| **Grantee Administration** (3% ADECA) | $75,431 |
| **TOTAL** | **$2,514,357** |

**Pre-Award Costs**

* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for Short Term Rental Mortgage and Utility (STRMU) assistance costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, during the continuation of the HOPWA program.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, during the continuation of the HOPWA program.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for facility based housing subsidy for permanent housing costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, during the continuation of the HOPWA program.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for master leasing costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, during the continuation of the HOPWA program.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for supportive services costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsors during the continuation of the HOPWA program. The project sponsors are AIDS Alabama, AIDS Alabama South, Birmingham AIDS Outreach, Five Horizons Health Services, Health Service Center, Medical Advocacy and Outreach, Selma AIDS Information & Referral, Thrive Alabama, and Unity Wellness Center.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for resource identification costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, during the continuation of the HOPWA program.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for housing information costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, during the continuation of the HOPWA program.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for technical assistance costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, during the continuation of the HOPWA program.
* The State requests permission to receive reimbursement for administrative costs incurred after the end of last year’s contract and prior to the executed award date of the agreement between the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and ADECA.  The costs would include eligible expenditures by both the grantee, ADECA, and project sponsor, AIDS Alabama, in the administration of the grant during the continuation of the HOPWA program.

Questions for AIDS Alabama may be directed to Kevin Finney, Director of Operations (Financial); Katherine McMullen, Director of Programs Administration; or Kathie M. Hiers, Chief Executive Officer at 205-324-9822.

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