

**PLWH/A Committee
Position Paper
June 2010**

A response to the 24-month lifetime cap from HRSA.

The need of housing for PLWH/A's has been a major issue of concern in the Baltimore EMA for years. It is needed because having housing provides positive health outcomes for PLWH/As in the Baltimore EMA that provide stability and keep them in care. In 2004, the PLWH/A Committee addressed the then-current needs of clients regarding housing in a position paper. In the paper, we identified a number of barriers to accessing housing which included: difficulties with the process of applying to Section 8, landlords not accepting rental or HOPWA vouchers, and long wait lists. We also identified possible solutions to the barriers such as: developing a list of landlords that accept housing vouchers, conducting seminars to educate clients on the housing application process and developing a list of subsidized housing that is accessible to the public.

Unfortunately, six years later, many of the same barriers to accessing housing in 2004 still remain in 2010, and virtually none of the possible solutions to the housing barriers have been considered. Further complicating matters, new barriers to accessing housing were identified that the committee did not mention in 2004. The process for getting Section 8 housing was still, in itself, a barrier, but it was found that many PLWH/As couldn't make the 90-day time limit on cashing in vouchers for Section 8 because they got sick. It was also noted that criminal history plays a major part in accessing Section 8 housing since certain ex-offenders are barred utilizing those services. We also found that a lack of housing significantly impacts a PLWH/As: ability keep employment, chance of committing criminal acts, ability to access education, and ability to stay in care.

New housing complications have also developed on the federal level from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in the form of a 24-month lifetime cap on accessing Ryan White housing. Having a 24-month lifetime cap, which was authorized in 2008, meant that clients who utilized the Ryan White temporary housing in March 2008, who could not find housing by March 2010, had to move out. The 24-month lifetime cap combined with the two-year wait list, which HOPWA currently has, increases the chance that many PLWH/As will end up homeless. Thankfully, the 24-month lifetime cap policy has been temporarily rescinded by HRSA. Grantees are not required to enforce the cap as HRSA reviews its effectiveness, but there is the possibility that it the cap will be reinstated as it was before.

In regards to the 24-month lifetime cap from HRSA, we believe that there should be *no limit* on the number of months a person should be provided housing. To prevent homelessness, housing should be provided until permanent housing is found. However, we feel that the client needs to be actively working toward finding housing and setting long and short-term goals for finding housing should be mandatory.