

**From:** Hopwa <Hopwa@hud.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, June 26, 2023 9:08 PM  
**To:** HOPWA-L@HUDLIST.HUD.GOV  
**Subject:** HOPWA Provider Spotlight: Chicago House



## **HOPWA Provider Spotlight**

### **Chicago House (Chicago, IL)**

The Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program received its first direct appropriations on October 28, 1992. The first appropriation provided formula funding to 39 jurisdictions including 11 states, Puerto Rico, and 27 cities. Thirty years later, the HOPWA program has grown and currently provides funding to 143 formula jurisdictions, 82 competitive permanent supportive housing (PSH) grants, 20 competitive special projects of national significance (SPNS) grants and over 1,000 project sponsors. This HOPWA Provider Spotlight series is part of HOPWA's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary recognition and highlights HOPWA programs

throughout the nation along with the important work they are doing to ensure low-income people living with HIV and their families have access to safe, stable housing.

This HOPWA Provider Spotlight features an interview with Chicago House and Social Service Agency located in Chicago, Illinois and includes information on Chicago House's work with transgender women of color. To learn more and about supporting and housing transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) people in your HOPWA program, HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS Housing (OHH) and the HOPWA Equity team are hosting a webinar for HOPWA grantees, project sponsors, and community partners on June 27, 2023 at 3:00pm EDT. The webinar will discuss awareness and examples of barriers, housing and non-housing-related, for transgender and non-gender conforming persons, including how these barriers may affect transgender and GNC people. Register for the webinar [here](#). The webinar will also be recorded and posted on the [HUD Exchange website](#).

In honor of Pride Month, HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS Housing would like to reaffirm its support for the LGBTQI+ community. HUD's Office of HIV/AIDS Housing is committed to supporting the LGBTQI+ community and working to increase equitable access to all HUD-assisted housing among this population, who are disproportionately impacted by the HIV epidemic. As always, thank you for your continued support of the HOPWA program and ending the HIV epidemic. Happy Pride month!

### **HOPWA Provider Spotlight Interview**

**HOPWA Provider:** Chicago House

**Location:** Chicago, Illinois

**Website:** [www.chicagohouse.org](http://www.chicagohouse.org)

**Twitter Handle:** [@ChicagoHouse85](https://twitter.com/ChicagoHouse85)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/TransLifeCare/>

**What is your organization's mission? Broadly, what kind of services does your organization provide?**

Chicago House empowers people living with or vulnerable to HIV/AIDS to lead healthy and dignified lives through housing and compassionate, client-centered support services.

Chicago House provides:

- [Housing](#) – we believe that housing is health. We provide housing and wraparound resources for low-income individuals and families who have experienced chronic homelessness or unstable housing and are living with or vulnerable to HIV.
- [Health](#) – We provide essential health services to individuals vulnerable to HIV. We are committed to preventing new HIV transmissions and ensuring individuals that are faced with a diagnosis are linked to care.
- [Employment](#) – We assist individuals who are LGBTQ+, impacted by HIV, and/or living with a disability in gaining financial independence by identifying barriers to employment and working with individuals to achieve success.
- [TransLife Care](#) – Our TransLife Care Program offers comprehensive and affirming housing, legal, medical, sexual health, and employment support for vulnerable individuals who identify as transgender, non-binary, or gender expansive.

### **Where is your organization located?**

Chicago House is based in Chicago, Illinois. Our administrative office is located in the Near South Side neighborhood. Our direct services are provided throughout Chicago, with on-site offices in Englewood, Uptown, and West Town, as well as mobile services.

### **How long has your organization been active? When did you first receive HOPWA funds?**

Chicago House was founded in 1985. HOPWA funding was first received in the mid to late 1990s. Initially HOPWA formula funding was received, but we also receive HOPWA competitive funding.

### **How do HOPWA funds contribute to your organization's mission? In other words, what services or programs within your organization are supported by HOPWA funds?**

Some funds support operational expenses, but funds also pay for support services such as TransLife Care Staff that provide direct services. HOPWA funds are also used for Employment Services. Chicago House has been able to provide residential housing, scattered site housing, case management, and other wraparound support services, including supporting our TransLife Care team.

### **What component of your HOPWA work would you like to highlight?**

We would like to highlight our work with TransWomen of Color. Chicago House recognizes TransWomen of Color as courageous because for one to walk in their own truth takes courage. There are obstacles to meeting basic human needs within this population because access to housing, healthcare, and employment is often barrier filled. As a result, many turn to survival sex work, which significantly increases risk to HIV, STIs, and violence. All of these factors increase recidivism.

Chicago House's dedication to TransWomen of Color does not stop at providing assistance. In fact, Chicago House turned down funding from a source that required individuals born with the male gender marker to be registered with selective service. While many wouldn't give the requirement a second thought, TransWomen of Color can be retraumatized or victimized by this requirement. Funding that may retraumatize or have an adverse effect on the overall well-being of a client is declined.

### **What is a major success that your organization has been able to achieve with the aid of HOPWA funds?**

A Chicago House client left the program based on reciprocity. She was able to get back to her own life and build a community for herself. She used the program as a way to grow and learn skill sets to create a vision for their own life. While not forced to, she left the program to allow space for another person to receive the same services and opportunities she received.

Some women have earned GED's and gained employable skill sets. Their stories illustrate the impact the HOPWA Program has on an individual's life. HOPWA provides healthcare through safe housing. HOPWA has helped get organizations and communities get to a place of HIV prevention and management. HOPWA is helpful in getting organizations to see there is a reality in getting to zero. HOPWA saves lives.

**What principles, strategies, and/or best practices guide your organization in serving the highlighted population?**

Chicago House's primary strategy is client-centered care and services. Chicago House offers Trans Safe Drop-Ins, an activity that allows individuals to receive employment, legal, medical, and Continuum of Care (CoC) Services. There are opportunities for individuals to receive food, HIV testing, and to build community all in one place.

During the pandemic, the drop-ins became virtual and through the power of technology, trans individuals were able to receive the same services virtually.

Chicago House literally built the Drop-Ins around the needs of Chicago's Trans population.

**How does your work connect to the National HIV/AIDS strategy and contribute to ending the HIV epidemic?**

Chicago House is very involved in Chicago's plan for Getting to Zero. Chicago House operates with the belief that Getting to Zero can be accomplished by connecting individuals to stable housing and maintaining regular engagement in healthcare and adherence to medication.

**What challenges or barriers has your organization faced while serving your selected subpopulation?**

The difference in the requirements of different funding sources is a barrier. Some funding sources, like HOPWA, require a positive HIV diagnosis, but what about prevention? Prevention is a primary factor in Getting to Zero.

**How has your organization addressed or surmounted those challenges?**

One way Chicago House has combatted this barrier is through the "Housing for Negatives Program." The program is specifically for people who are HIV-negative but are at higher risk of contracting HIV.

**What hopes or goals does your organization have for the future? How do you see HOPWA supporting those goals?**

The goals are to continue the Getting to Zero IL work and National HIV strategy. Chicago House envisions a day when there are virtually zero HIV Transmissions. HOPWA has been a great source to help serve individuals – help identify and overcome barriers. HOPWA helps support innovative programs like Chicago House's Transformative Housing Program.

**Is there anything else that you'd like to share (something that makes your organization unique, advice for other HOPWA providers, etc.)?**

The greatest thing that makes Chicago House unique is its belief that "If you build it, they will come," isn't true. Chicago House is building what people have asked them to build. Resilience and struggle should never be the requirement or the measurement by which people receive help.

*A special thank you to the staff at Chicago House for sharing the important work being done in Chicago, IL to provide needed housing and services to people living with HIV and their families!*

For more information on the HOPWA program's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, visit here:  
[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/hopwa/30th\\_anniversary](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/hopwa/30th_anniversary)



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*Housing is a structural intervention in ending the HIV 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](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/hopwa)

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