

Finding safe, affordable housing when you are HIV+ can be very challenging. But help is available through numerous housing assistance programs. A housing search advocate can explain the different options and help you with applications.

Look for a housing agency or AIDS service organization in your area and give them a call. Ask for the “housing search advocate” or “someone to help me look for housing.” Make sure that you keep in touch with your advocate and if you move, give them your new address or phone number.

Different housing programs are available in different places. Check to see which of the following housing programs are available in your community:

Transitional program: housing you can stay in for a short period of time. There is a lot of support and also a lot of rules. These programs can help you find permanent housing while you are living there. Sometimes you have to share an apartment or share a kitchen and bathroom. Some programs are just for HIV+ people and/or people in recovery from drugs and alcohol.

HIV residential program: permanent housing for HIV+ people. You can stay there as long as you pay your rent and follow the rules. Some programs provide you with your own apartment. Others provide you with your own bedroom and you have to share a bathroom and a kitchen.

A residential program may be a great place if you are looking for a lot of support and help.

Public housing authorities: several different housing assistance programs for low-income people and persons living with disabilities

HOUSING OPTIONS FOR HIV+ PEOPLE

By Rachel Moorhead

(including HIV). Not every community has a housing authority, however, many larger cities do.

Housing authorities provide two types of assistance: housing in buildings they own (housing developments) and rental assistance subsidies. Subsidies are not attached to a particular apartment or building. You need to find an apartment in the community and the subsidy helps to pay the rent and utilities.

Eligibility for these programs is based on your family’s household size and income. If social security is your only source of income, you are probably eligible. Some agencies have special housing available for the elderly and disabled. So if you are disabled, let the housing authority know when you apply.

There may be more than one housing authority in the area where you want to live, especially if you are looking in a large city. You will need to contact each housing authority to find out where they take applications, what is available and how long you will be on the waiting list. Fill out applications at as many authorities as you can, even places that might not be your first choice.

Scattered-site housing: program


that helps you find an apartment in the community. Once you move in, the program helps pay your rent and provides services like case management and transportation. You can stay in your apartment as long as you pay the rent and follow the program rules.

There are not a lot of rules in this program and you live on your own. Having your own apartment can be great but some people get lonely.

Private rental market: you find an apartment through the newspapers or a realtor and pay full rent. You may be able to find a program that will assist you with the rent through a subsidy. In this case, you will pay a portion of your household income towards rent and utilities. The housing agency or program will pay the rest directly to the landlord.

All government-housing programs provide some kind of help with rent. Generally you will pay about 1/3 of your household income towards rent and utilities and the program will pay the rest.

Sometimes people are discriminated against when they are looking for housing because of things like race, sexual orientation, physical disability (including HIV), or source of income. If you think this is the case, let your housing advocate know and ask about assistance from a legal advocate.

Information in this article comes from the AIDS Housing Corporation (AHC) booklet, “How to Get a Place Called Home.” To learn more, go the AHC website at www.ahc.org or check the “links” section of the AIDS Housing of Washington website at www.aidshousing.org. 

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