

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Networking Group

New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority

Special Needs Housing: Housing for Persons with Special Needs

HFA Staff Contact

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**New Mexico Mortgage
Finance Authority**

2024 NCSHA Award Submission

ENTRY CATEGORY:

Special Needs Housing

ENTRY SUBCATEGORY:

**Housing for Persons with
Special Needs**

ENTRY NAME:

**Housing Opportunities for
Persons with AIDS Networking
Group**



New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority's Vision and Mission

Approaching 50 years as the state's housing authority, New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority's (MFA) vision is for all New Mexicans to have quality, affordable housing opportunities. MFA is the state's leader in affordable housing, providing innovative products, education, and services to strengthen families and communities. The Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) Program provides housing assistance, in the form of rent, mortgage or utility payments, to people who have a documented HIV/AIDS diagnosis that are at or below 80% Area Median Income.

The HOPWA Networking Group ("Group") is Innovative

Initiated by MFA staff, this Group was formed to address the unique situations often encountered by grantees and project sponsors that are not specifically addressed in either the Code of Federal Regulations or the many program resources the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has made available to support the HOPWA program. As a result of the pandemic, it has been several years since HUD hosted an in-person conference dedicated to those who administer HOPWA funding. Without the opportunity to network with partner agencies, the disconnect has left us to address these challenges alone. We reached out to organizations working to house this population with the idea of creating a group in which best practices from around the country might be shared. We also made connections at the United States Conference on HIV/AIDS in Washington, D.C. in September 2023. The result supported the idea that partner collaboration provides benefits for not just the group itself, but also for the entire population we all work to serve.

The Project is Replicable

The success of this Group has been noticed by employees that administer other programs/projects within MFA as a potential resource for their focused work as well. In addition to the resources that are available for the many different programs and practices that help New Mexicans obtain housing, MFA has now seen – through the HOPWA Networking Group – that there is often much to be gained from collaboration with other states that also face similar challenges in helping people get housed. For example, employees that administer MFA's HOME Rehabilitation Program are in the process of replicating the HOPWA Group by establishing HOME Rehabilitation program contacts in each state and ultimately creating a similar networking group. This practice can be applied to almost any effort focused on a particular state or community. Together, we can all work to have the greatest impact on those who desperately need assistance.

The Project Responds to an Important State Housing Need

Of the more than 60 people representing 25 states (including Washington, D.C.) who have participated in this Group, each one of us is working with HOPWA funding in some capacity to address the HIV/AIDS population in our respective state to offer housing assistance to all who are eligible. As we meet quarterly, we discuss the most forefront challenges in our collective work. In many situations, there are people whose unique circumstances might have kept them from receiving HOPWA assistance if one of us had not heard how others have addressed a similar situation. As a result of our collaboration, we are contributing even more so to the effort to meet the housing needs in every one of these 25 states.

The Group Demonstrates Measurable Benefits to HFA-Targeted Customers

One of the priorities of the HOPWA Program is collecting client data to report to HUD on an annual basis. This information includes demographic data, type(s) of housing assistance provided, and overall expenditures of grant funds. Each project sponsor collects client data in a homeless management information system (HMIS) and uses that system to run reports that are used to complete the federal Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER). This is an incredibly detailed report created by HUD that project sponsors and grantees are required to complete. The report has been updated in the last year, and HOPWA programs from around the country – through the HOPWA Networking Group – have been working together to address the many challenges this latest report has presented. The Group has met just three times since its inception in August 2023, and one of the discussion topics in each meeting since then has been the CAPER report. Each state has its own reporting period, so we have all been sharing our individual experiences with the intent of landing on an efficient process for completing this report each year. We anticipate the measurable benefit will be evident in the coming year or two. As each state begins to master this report and submits to HUD what that state believes to be a completely accurate account of the impact of HOPWA funding around the entire country, our hope is that we are collectively representing the enormous need for this program to continue to be funded each year – again, working together to effectively help this community, particularly the individuals who need it the most.

The Collective Group is Comprised of Organizations that Have a Proven Track Record of Success in the Marketplace

The HOPWA Networking Group currently includes grantees, project sponsors, grant administrators, housing directors, compliance specialists, housing strategists, case managers, and two executive directors of national organizations. Together, we represent countless years of experience helping persons with HIV/AIDS, advocating for increased funding for our communities, ensuring federal compliance with HOPWA funds, and now networking with our partners from throughout the United States to help improve the lives of this population through effective collaboration.

The Group is Experiencing the Benefits of Collaboration...at No Cost

One way we continue to support each other in this Group is by sharing the questions we each submit to HUD through its “HOPWA Ask A Question format.” We realized we each had our own collections of responses from HUD to challenging situations and decided to create a “common resource” to include all questions/responses related to HOPWA. We now update this resource as often as is necessary to keep it current for everyone’s benefit.

This Group is an example of what can be accomplished when people come together to share their successes and challenges in an effort to benefit not just their own communities, but also the community at large, across the country, to have a stronger impact together than any one of us could have on our own. Our hope is that every person with HIV/AIDS who seeks housing assistance in the U.S. will find it, through one of our organizations – without encountering any barriers – therefore effectively reducing their risk of homelessness and improving their access to care, possibly as a result of our collaborative efforts, at no additional cost to any of us.

The Group Demonstrates the Effective use of Resources

For the purpose of this Group, our most effective resources are ourselves and our collective experiences in helping this population. We are effective because we represent a range of experience from less than one year to more than 20 years working with HOPWA programs and guidelines. Those who are newer to the work do not have to face unique challenges alone, reinventing the wheel by trying to creatively address particular situations. The experiences we all share together effectively save time for everyone and have even led to the creation of additional resources, such as the collective HOPWA AAQ Questions/Responses.

The Group Effectively Employs Partnerships

As previously referenced, the Group was recently joined by people representing two national organizations who reached out to us because they heard about our Group from colleagues across the country. One organization engages in federal advocacy for increasing HOPWA funding and for changing statutes and regulations to make HOPWA easier to implement. This may prove to benefit every one of our individual programs throughout the country as we continue to determine the most effective way to impact this population through the HOPWA Networking Group. We welcome the participation of all who work to help the HIV/AIDS community through the HOPWA Program.

The Group Works to Achieve Strategic Objectives

Since its inception, the Group has sought to meet its objective of improving the process of helping the HIV/AIDS community to access housing by mitigating barriers through the collaboration of HOPWA programs from around the country. The challenges we face have included innovatively addressing unique situations encountered by this population that do not always fit with the specific regulations required with HOPWA funding. Through the combined experience of the 60-plus people who participate in this group, we continue to creatively address these situations, ensuring that no one is excluded from receiving the housing assistance they deserve. Through our efforts, we are impacting the HIV/AIDS community – in over 25 states around the country – efficiently, collaboratively, and strategically.

New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority

Housing Opportunities for
Persons with AIDS
Networking Group

Established 2023

Jackie Homet

Program Manager

Community Development Department



HOPWA Networking Group

Purpose:

The Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) Networking Group was formed for the primary purpose of connecting people who work with HOPWA funding around the country. There are many resources for training and support that can be found on the HUD Exchange as well as guidelines provided by HUD for those working with HOPWA funding. This networking group gives people an opportunity to share their experiences managing this funding and best practices for finding solutions to situations not specifically addressed in the HUD resources.

HOPWA Networking Group

Mission:

“HOPWA providers meet together on a quarterly basis to discuss ideas and best practices with the primary purpose of creating a support network to positively impact those with HIV/AIDS receiving HOPWA assistance throughout the country.”



HOPWA Networking Group

Vision:

“Through collaboration, we will strengthen the supports and resources available in our communities, ultimately creating long-term, positive outcomes for all people with HIV/AIDS throughout the entire country.”



HOPWA Networking Group

Values:

- We are all here to learn and grow.
- We will not discourage anyone's ideas or contributions and will encourage everyone to participate.
- We will treat everyone with dignity and respect at all times.
- Topics discussed should pertain to the group's mission.
- We will not represent any legal entity, cause, or association at any time.
- We will ensure compliance with all HOPWA regulations established by HUD.

HOPWA Networking Group

Motto:

“Bringing the country together to most effectively ensure that HOPWA funds create long-term, positive outcomes for the HIV/AIDS population.”



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